

THE BEGGAR'S OPERA



*Nos hæc novimus esse nihil.**

* We know these things to be nothing at all. Martial.

THE BEGGAR'S OPERA



DRAMATIS PERSONAE

PEACHUM

LOCKIT

MACHEATH

FILCH

JEMMY TWITCHER

CROOK-FINGERED JACK

WAT. DREARY

ROBIN OF BAGSHOT

NIMMING NED

HARRY PADINGTON

MATT OF THE MINT

BEN BUDGE

BEGGAR

PLAYER

Macheath's gang

Constables, Drawer, Turnkey

MRS. PEACHUM

POLLY PEACHUM

LUCY LOCKIT

DIANA TRAPES

MRS. COAXER

DOLLY TRULL

MRS. VIXEN

BETTY DOXY

JENNY DIVER

MRS. SLAMMEKIN

SUKY TAWDRY

MOLLY BRAZEN

Women of the town

INTRODUCTION

BEGGAR, PLAYER

BEGGAR. If poverty be a title to poetry, I am sure no-body can dispute mine. I own myself of the company of beggars; and I make one at their weekly festivals at St. Giles's.² I have a small yearly salary for my catches,³ and am welcome to a dinner there whenever I please, which is more than most poets can say.

PLAYER. As we live by the Muses, 'tis but gratitude in us to encourage poetical merit where-ever we find it. The Muses, contrary to all other ladies, pay no distinction to dress, and never partially⁴ mistake the pertness of embroidery for wit, nor the modesty of want for dulness. Be the author who he will, we push his play as far as it will go. So (though you are in want) I wish you success heartily.

BEGGAR. This piece I own was originally writ for the celebrating the marriage of James Chanter and Moll Lay, two most excellent ballad-singers. I have introduc'd the similes that are in all your celebrated operas: the Swallow, the Moth, the Bee, the Ship, the Flower, etc. Besides, I have a prison scene, which the ladies always reckon charmingly pathetick. As to the parts, I have observ'd such a nice impartiality to our two ladies, that it is impossible for either of them to take offence.⁵ I hope I may be forgiven, that I have not made my opera throughout unnatural, like those in vogue; for I have no recitative: excepting this, as I

² St. Giles's the district around St. Giles's in the Fields was London's skid row in the early eighteenth century ³ catches popular songs, often burlesque and often obscene ⁴ partially being partial ⁵ An allusion to a contemporary quarrel between the two leading sopranos of the Italian Opera

have consented to have neither prologue nor epilogue, it must be allow'd an opera in all its forms. The piece indeed hath been heretofore frequently represented by ourselves in our great room at St. Giles's, so that I cannot too often acknowledge your charity in bringing it now on the stage.

PLAYER. But I see 'tis time for us to withdraw; the actors are preparing to begin. Play away the ouverture.

(*Exeunt*)

THE BEGGAR'S OPERA



Act I

SCENE I

PEACHUM's *House*

(PEACHUM *sitting at a table with a large book of accounts before him*)

AIR I. *An old woman cloathed in gray.*¹

Through all the employments of life
Each neighbour abuses his brother;
Whore and rogue they call husband and wife:
All professions be-rogue one another.
The priest calls the lawyer a cheat,
The lawyer be-knaves the divine;
And the statesman, because he's so great,²
Thinks his trade as honest as mine.

A lawyer is an honest employment, so is mine. Like me too he acts in a double capacity, both against rogues and for 'em; for 'tis but fitting that we should protect and encourage cheats, since we live by 'em.

SCENE II

PEACHUM, FILCH

FILCH. Sir, Black Moll hath sent word her tryal comes on in the afternoon, and she hopes you will order matters so as to bring her off.

¹ For the music of *The Beggar's Opera*, Gay employed familiar ballads for which he wrote new lyrics. The ballad source, if known, will be given at the beginning of each air ² great a term often applied to Walpole with sarcastic overtones

PEACHUM. Why, she may plead her belly at worst;¹ to my knowledge she hath taken care of that security. But as the wench is very active and industrious, you may satisfy her that I'll soften the evidence.

FILCH. Tom Gagg, Sir, is found guilty.

PEACHUM. A lazy dog! When I took him the time before, I told him what he would come to if he did not mend his hand. This is death without reprieve. I may venture to book him. (Writes) For Tom Gagg, forty pounds. Let Betty Sly know that I'll save her from transportation,² for I can get more by her staying in England.

FILCH. Betty hath brought more goods into our lock³ to-year than any five of the gang; and in truth, 'tis a pity to lose so good a customer.

PEACHUM. If none of the gang take her off, she may, in the common course of business, live a twelve-month longer. I love to let women scape. A good sportsman always lets the hen-partridges fly, because the breed of the game depends upon them. Besides, here the law allows us no reward; there is nothing to be got by the death of women—except our wives.

FILCH. Without dispute, she is a fine woman! 'Twas to her I was oblig'd for my education, and (to say a bold word) she hath train'd up more young fellows to the business than the gaming-table.

PEACHUM. Truly, Filch, thy observation is right. We and the surgeons are more beholden to women than all the professions besides.

AIR II. *The bonny grey-ey'd morn, etc.*

FILCH. 'Tis woman that seduces all mankind,

By her we first were taught the wheedling arts:
Her very eyes can cheat; when most she's kind,
She tricks us of our money with our hearts.

For her, like wolves by night we roam for prey,

¹ plead her belly by law, pregnant women could not be hanged

² transportation criminals were frequently sent to work, virtually as slaves, in the colonies ³ lock warehouse for stolen goods

And practise ev'ry fraud to bribe her charms;
For suits of love, like law, are won by pay,
And beauty must be fee'd into our arms.

PEACHUM. But make haste to Newgate,⁴ boy, and let my friends know what I intend; for I love to make them easy one way or other.

FILCH. When a gentleman is long kept in suspense, penitence may break his spirit ever after. Besides, certainty gives a man a good air upon his tryal, and makes him risque another without fear or scruple. But I'll away, for 'tis a pleasure to be the messenger of comfort to friends in affliction.

SCENE III

PEACHUM

But 'tis now high time to look about me for a decent execution against next Sessions.¹ I hate a lazy rogue, by whom one can get nothing 'till he is hang'd. A register of the gang. (*reading*) Crook-finger'd Jack. A year and a half in the service; let me see how much the stock owes to his industry; one, two, three, four, five gold watches, and seven silver ones. A mighty clean-handed fellow! Sixteen snuff-boxes, five of them of true gold. Six dozen of handkerchiefs, four silver-hilted swords, half a dozen of shirts, three tye-perri-wigs, and a piece of broad cloth. Considering these are only the fruits of his leisure hours, I don't know a prettier fellow, for no man alive hath a more engaging presence of mind upon the road.² Wat Dreary, alias Brown Will, an irregular dog, who hath an underhand way of disposing of his goods. I'll try him only for a Sessions or two longer upon his good behavior. Harry Paddington, a poor petty-larceny rascal, without the

⁴ Newgate London's most notorious prison

¹ Sessions quarterly sessions of the criminal court. Peachum betrays his "employees" to the law when they have ceased to be useful as thieves ² upon the road as a highwayman

least genius; that fellow, though he were to live these six months, will never come to the gallows with any credit. Slippery Sam; he goes off the next Sessions, for the villain hath the impudence to have views of following his trade as a taylor, which he calls an honest employment. Matt of the Mint; listed not above a month ago, a promising sturdy fellow, and diligent in his way; somewhat too bold and hasty, and may raise good contributions on the publick, if he does not cut himself short by murder. Tom Tipple, a guzzling soaking sot, who is always too drunk to stand himself, or to make others stand. A cart³ is absolutely necessary for him. Robin of Bagshot,⁴ alias Gorgon, alias Bluff Bob, alias Carbuncle, alias Bob Booty.

SCENE IV

PEACHUM, MRS. PEACHUM

MRS. PEACHUM. What of Bob Booty, husband? I hope nothing bad hath betided him. You know, my dear, he's a favourite customer of mine. 'Twas he made me a present of this ring.

PEACHUM. I have set his name down in the black-list, that's all, my dear; he spends his life among women, and as soon as his money is gone, one or other of the ladies will hang him for the reward, and there's forty pounds lost to us for-ever.

MRS. PEACHUM. You know, my dear, I never meddle in matters of death; I always leave those affairs to you. Women indeed are bitter bad judges in these cases, for they are so partial to the brave that they think every man handsome who is going to the camp or the gallows.

³ cart the cart which carried convicted felons to Tyburn Hill to be hanged ⁴ Robin of Bagshot Bagshot Heath, just outside London, was a favorite spot for robberies

AIR III. *Cold and raw, etc.*

If any wench Venus's girdle wear,
Though she be never so ugly;
Lillies and roses will quickly appear,
And her face look wond'rous smuggly.
Beneath the left ear so fit but a cord,
(A rope so charming a zone is!)
The youth in his cart hath the air of a lord,
And we cry, there dies an Adonis!

But really, husband, you should not be too hard-hearted, for you never had a finer, braver set of men than at present. We have not had a murder among them all, these seven months. And truly, my dear, that is a great blessing.

PEACHUM. What a dickens is the woman always a whimpring about murder for? No gentleman is ever look'd upon the worse for killing a man in his own defence; and if business cannot be carried on without it, what would you have a gentleman do?

MRS. PEACHUM. If I am in the wrong, my dear, you must excuse me, for no-body can help the frailty of an overscrupulous conscience.

PEACHUM. Murder is as fashionable a crime as a man can be guilty of. How many fine gentlemen have we in Newgate every year, purely upon that article! If they have wherewithal to persuade the jury to bring it in manslaughter, what are they the worse for it? So, my dear, have done upon this subject. Was Captain Macheath here this morning, for the bank-notes he left with you last week?

MRS. PEACHUM. Yes, my dear; and though the bank hath stopt payment, he was so cheerful and so agreeable! sure there is not a finer gentleman upon the road than the captain! If he comes from Bagshot at any reasonable hour he hath promis'd to make one this evening with Polly and me, and Bob Booty, at a

party of quadrille.¹ Pray, my dear, is the captain rich?

PEACHUM. The captain keeps too good company ever to grow rich. Marybone² and the chocolate-houses are his undoing. The man that proposes to get money by play should have the education of a fine gentleman, and be train'd up to it from his youth.

MRS. PEACHUM. Really, I am sorry upon Polly's account the captain hath not more discretion. What business hath he to keep company with lords and gentlemen? he should leave them to prey upon one another.

PEACHUM. Upon Polly's account! What, a plague, does the woman mean?—Upon Polly's account!

MRS. PEACHUM. Captain Macheath is very fond of the girl.

PEACHUM. And what then?

MRS. PEACHUM. If I have any skill in the ways of women, I am sure Polly thinks him a very pretty man.

PEACHUM. And what then? You would not be so mad to have the wench marry him! Gamesters and highwaymen are generally very good to their whores, but they are very devils to their wives.

MRS. PEACHUM. But if Polly should be in love, how should we help her, or how can she help herself? Poor girl, I am in the utmost concern about her.

AIR IV. Why is your faithful slave disdain'd?

If love the virgin's heart invade,
How, like a moth, the simple maid
Still plays about the flame!
If soon she be not made a wife,
Her honour's sing'd, and then for life,
She's—what I dare not name.

PEACHUM. Look ye, wife. A handsome wench in our

¹ quadrille a popular card game ² Marybone Marylebone, a village two miles northwest of London, whose gardens and bowling greens were a popular rendezvous for the city's gamblers and thieves

way of business is as profitable as at the bar of a Temple³ coffee-house, who looks upon it as her livelihood to grant every liberty but one. You see I would indulge the girl as far as prudently we can. In any thing, but marriage! After that, my dear, how shall we be safe? Are we not then in her husband's power? For a husband hath the absolute power over all a wife's secrets but her own. If the girl had the discretion of a court lady, who can have a dozen young fellows at her ear without complying with one, I should not matter it; but Polly is tinder, and a spark will at once set her on a flame. Married! If the wench does not know her own profit, sure she knows her own pleasure better than to make herself a property! My daughter to me should be, like a court lady to a minister of state, a key to the whole gang.⁴ Married! If the affair is not already done, I'll terrify her from it, by the example of our neighbours.

MRS. PEACHUM. May-hap, my dear, you may injure the girl. She loves to imitate the fine ladies, and she may only allow the captain liberties in the view of interest.

PEACHUM. But 'tis your duty, my dear, to warn the girl against her ruin, and to instruct her how to make the most of her beauty. I'll go to her this moment, and sift her.⁵ In the meantime, wife, rip out the coronets and marks of these dozen of cambric handkerchiefs, for I can dispose of them this afternoon to a chap⁶ in the city.

³ Temple district between Fleet St. and the Thames where two of the Inns of Court (law schools), Inner and Middle Temple, are located ⁴ The use of the word "gang" furthers the parallel between high and low life, *i.e.*, gang of courtiers, or of thieves. See also Act II, i ⁵ sift her sound her out ⁶ chap customer

SCENE V

MRS. PEACHUM

Never was a man more out of the way in an argument than my husband! Why must our Polly, forsooth, differ from her sex, and love only her husband? And why must Polly's marriage, contrary to all observation, make her the less followed by other men? All men are thieves in love, and like a woman the better for being another's property.

AIR V. *Of all the simple things we do, etc.*

A maid is like the golden ore,
 Which hath guineas intrinsical in't,
 Whose worth is never known, before
 It is try'd and imprest in the Mint.
 A wife's like a guinea in gold,
 Stamped with the name of her spouse;
 Now here, now there; is bought, or is sold;
 And is current in every house.

SCENE VI

MRS. PEACHUM, FILCH

MRS. PEACHUM. Come hither Filch. I am as fond of this child, as though my mind misgave me he were my own. He hath as fine a hand at picking a pocket as a woman, and is as nimble-finger'd as a juggler. If an unlucky Session does not cut the rope of thy life, I pronounce, boy, thou wilt be a great man in history. Where was your post last night, my boy?

FILCH. I ply'd at the opera, madam; and considering 'twas neither dark nor rainy, so that there was no great hurry in getting chairs and coaches, made a tolerable hand on't. These seven handkerchiefs, madam.

MRS. PEACHUM. Colour'd ones, I see. They are of

sure sale from our ware-house at Redriff¹ among the seamen.

FILCH. And this snuff-box.

MRS. PEACHUM. Set in gold! A pretty encouragement this to a young beginner.

FILCH. I had a fair tug at a charming gold watch. Pox take the taylors for making the fobs so deep and narrow! It stuck by the way, and I was forc'd to make my escape under a coach. Really, madam, I fear I shall be cut off in the flower of my youth, so that every now and then (since I was pumpt)² I have thoughts of taking up and going to sea.

MRS. PEACHUM. You should go to Hockley in the Hole,³ and to Marybone, child, to learn valour. These are the schools that have bred so many brave men. I thought, boy, by this time, thou hadst lost fear as well as shame. Poor lad! how little does he know as yet of the Old-Baily!⁴ For the first fact, I'll insure thee from being hang'd; and going to sea, Filch, will come time enough upon a sentence of transportation. But now, since you have nothing better to do, ev'n go to your book, and learn your catechism; for really a man makes but an ill figure in the ordinary's paper,⁵ who cannot give a satisfactory answer to his questions. But, hark you, my lad. Don't tell me a lye; for you know I hate a lyar. Do you know of any thing that hath past between Captain Macheath and our Polly?

FILCH. I beg you, madam, don't ask me; for I must either tell a lye to you or to Miss Polly; for I promis'd her I would not tell.

MRS. PEACHUM. But when the honour of our family is concern'd—

FILCH. I shall lead a sad life with Miss Polly, if ever

¹ Redriff dock section of London ² pumpt held under the public pump, a punishment for juvenile offenders ³ Hockley in the Hole where bear-baiting and other violent entertainments were held ⁴ Old-Baily (Old Bailey), London's central criminal court ⁵ ordinary's paper the prison chaplain's report of a condemned man's confession

she come to know that I told you. Besides, I would not willingly forfeit my own honour by betraying any body.

MRS. PEACHUM. Yonder comes my husband and Polly. Come, Filch, you shall go with me into my own room, and tell me the whole story. I'll give thee a most delicious glass of a cordial⁶ that I keep for my own drinking.

SCENE VII

PEACHUM, POLLY

POLLY. I know as well as any of the fine ladies how to make the most of my self and of my man too. A woman knows how to be mercenary, though she hath never been in a court or at an assembly.¹ We have it in our natures, papa. If I allow Captain Macheath some trifling liberties, I have this watch and other visible marks of his favour to show for it. A girl who cannot grant some things, and refuse what is most material, will make but a poor hand of her beauty, and soon be thrown upon the common.

AIR VI. *What shall I do to show how much I love her?*

Virgins are like the fair flower in its lustre,
Which in the garden enamels the ground;
Near it the bees in play flutter and cluster,
And gaudy butterflies frolick around.
But, when once pluck'd, 'tis no longer alluring,
To Covent-Garden² 'tis sent, (as yet sweet,)
There fades, and shrinks, and grows past all enduring,
Rots, stinks, and dies, and is trod under feet.

PEACHUM. You know, Polly, I am not against your toying and trifling with a customer in the way of

⁶ cordial a liqueur

¹ assembly social gathering or ball ² Covent-Garden London's chief flower market. Because it was also the haunt of prostitutes in Gay's time, there are a number of *double entendres* in the passage

business, or to get out a secret or so. But if I find out that you have play'd the fool and are married, you jade you, I'll cut your throat, hussy. Now you know my mind.

SCENE VIII

PEACHUM, POLLY, MRS. PEACHUM

AIR VII. *Oh London is a fine town.*(MRS. PEACHUM, *in a very great passion*)

Our Polly is a sad slut! nor heeds what we have taught her.

I wonder any man alive will ever rear a daughter!

For she must have both hoods and gowns, and hoops to swell her pride.

With scarfs, and stays, and gloves and lace; and she will have men beside;

And when she's drest with care and cost, all-tempting, fine and gay,

As men should serve a cowcumber,¹ she flings herself away.

You baggage! you hussy! you inconsiderate jade! had you been hang'd, it would not have vex'd me, for that might have been your misfortune; but to do such a mad thing by choice! The wench is married, husband.

PEACHUM. Married! The captain is a bold man, and will risque any thing for money; to be sure he believes her a fortune. Do you think your mother and I should have liv'd comfortably so long together, if ever we had been married? Baggage!

MRS. PEACHUM. I knew she was always a proud slut; and now the wench hath play'd the fool and married, because forsooth she would do like the gentry. Can you support the expence of a husband, hussy, in gaming, drinking and whoring? have you money enough to carry on the daily quarrels of man and wife about who shall squander most? There are not many hus-

¹ cowcumber cucumber

bands and wives, who can bear the charges of plaguing one another in a handsome way, If you must be married, could you introduce no-body into our family but a highwayman? Why, thou foolish jade, thou wilt be as ill-us'd, and as much neglected, as if thou hadst married a lord!

PEACHUM. Let not your anger, my dear, break through the rules of decency, for the captain looks upon himself in the military capacity, as a gentleman by his profession. Besides what he hath already, I know he is in a fair way of getting, or of dying; and both these ways, let me tell you, are most excellent chances for a wife.² Tell me, hussy, are you ruin'd or no?

MRS. PEACHUM. With Polly's fortune, she might very well have gone off to a person of distinction. Yes, that you might, you pouting slut!

PEACHUM. What, is the wench dumb? Speak, or I'll make you plead by squeezing out an answer from you. Are you really bound wife to him, or are you only upon liking?

(*Pinches her*)

POLLY. Oh! (*Screaming*)

MRS. PEACHUM. How the mother is to be pitied who hath handsome daughters! Locks, bolts, bars, and lectures of morality are nothing to them: they break through them all. They have as much pleasure in cheating a father and mother, as in cheating at cards.

PEACHUM. Why, Polly, I shall soon know if you are married, by Macheath's keeping from our house.

AIR VIII. *Grim king of the ghosts, etc.*

POLLY. Can love be controul'd by advice?

Will Cupid our mothers obey?

² This scene is a broad take-off on a stock situation in eighteenth-century stage comedy—the dutiful child torn between the demands of her heart and her parents' insistence on a marriage of convenience

Though my heart were as frozen as ice,
At his flame 'twould have melted away.

When he kist me so closely he prest,
'Twas so sweet that I must have comply'd:
So I thought it both safest and best
To marry, for fear you should chide.

MRS. PEACHUM. Then all the hopes of our family are gone for ever and ever!

PEACHUM. And Macheath may hang his father and mother-in-law, in hope to get into their daughter's fortune.

POLLY. I did not marry him (as 'tis the fashion) coolly and deliberately for honour or money. But, I love him.

MRS. PEACHUM. Love him! worse and worse! I thought the girl had been better bred. Oh husband, husband! her folly makes me mad! my head swims! I'm distracted! I can't support myself—Oh! (*Faints*)

PEACHUM. See, wench, to what a condition you have reduc'd your poor mother! a glass of cordial, this instant. How the poor woman takes it to heart! (*POLLY goes out and returns with it*) Ah, hussy, now this is the only comfort your mother has left!

POLLY. Give her another glass, sir; my mama drinks double the quantity whenever she is out of order. This, you see, fetches³ her.

MRS. PEACHUM. The girl shows such a readiness, and so much concern, that I could almost find it in my heart to forgive her.

AIR IX. *O Jenny, O Jenny, where hast thou been.*

O Polly, you might have toy'd and kist.

By keeping men off, you keep them on.

POLLY. But he so teaz'd me,

And he so pleas'd me,

What I did, you must have done.

³ fetches revives

MRS. PEACHUM. Not with a highwayman.—You sorry slut!

PEACHUM. A word with you, wife. 'Tis no new thing for a wench to take man without consent of parents. You know 'tis the frailty of woman, my dear.

MRS. PEACHUM. Yes, indeed, the sex is frail. But the first time a woman is frail, she should be somewhat nice⁴ methinks, for then or never is the time to make her fortune. After that, she hath nothing to do but to guard herself from being found out, and she may do what she pleases.

PEACHUM. Make your self a little easy; I have a thought shall soon set all matters again to rights. Why so melancholy, Polly? since what is done cannot be undone, we must all endeavour to make the best of it.

MRS. PEACHUM. Well, Polly; as far as one woman can forgive another, I forgive thee.—Your father is too fond of you, hussy.

POLLY. Then all my sorrows are at an end.

MRS. PEACHUM. A mighty likely speech in troth, for a wench who is just married!

AIR X. *Thomas, I cannot, etc.*

POLLY. I, like a ship in storms, was tost;
 Yet afraid to put in to land;
 For seiz'd in the port the vessel's lost,
 Whose treasure is contrebond.
 The waves are laid,
 My duty's paid.
 O joy beyond expression!
 Thus, safe a-shore,
 I ask no more,
 My all is in my possession.

PEACHUM. I hear customers in t'other room; go, talk with 'em, Polly; but come to us again, as soon as they are gone.—But, hark ye, child, if 'tis the gentleman

⁴ nice careful, discriminating

who was here yesterday about the repeating-watch;⁵ say, you believe we can't get intelligence of it, till to-morrow. For I lent it to Suky Straddle, to make a figure with it to-night at a tavern in Drury-Lane.⁶ If t'other gentleman calls for the silver-hilted sword; you know Beetle-brow'd Jemmy hath it on, and he doth not come from Tunbridge⁷ till Tuesday night; so that it cannot be had till then.

SCENE IX

PEACHUM, MRS. PEACHUM

PEACHUM. Dear wife, be a little pacified. Don't let your passion run away with your senses. Polly, I grant you, hath done a rash thing.

MRS. PEACHUM. If she had had only an intrigue with the fellow, why the very best families have excus'd and huddled up a frailty of that sort. 'Tis marriage, husband, that makes it a blemish.

PEACHUM. But money, wife, is the true fuller's earth¹ for reputations, there is not a spot or a stain but what it can take out. A rich rogue now-a-days is fit company for any gentleman; and the world, my dear, hath not such a contempt for roguery as you imagine. I tell you, wife, I can make this match turn to our advantage.

MRS. PEACHUM. I am very sensible, husband, that Captain Macheath is worth money, but I am in doubt whether he hath not two or three wives already, and

⁵ repeating watch an elaborate pocket watch which struck the time ⁶ Drury-Lane a section near Covent Garden, famous for its theatre and infamous for its streetwalkers ⁷ Tunbridge New Tunbridge Wells, a fashionable spa located a few miles north of London. The "silver-hilted sword" would enable Jemmy, a pickpocket, to mingle more readily with the elegantly dressed gentry

¹ fuller's earth a claylike substance used as a purifying or cleaning agent; in the modern sense, a spot remover

then if he should dye in a Session or two, Polly's dower would come into dispute.

PEACHUM. That, indeed, is a point which ought to be consider'd.

AIR XI. *A soldier and a sailor.*

A fox may steal your hens, sir,
 A whore your health and pence, sir,
 Your daughter rob your chest, sir,
 Your wife may steal your rest, sir,
 A thief your goods and plate.²
 But this is all but picking;
 With rest, pence, chest and chicken,
 It ever was decreed, sir,
 If lawyer's hand is fee'd, sir,
 He steals your whole estate.

The lawyers are bitter enemies to those in our way. They don't care that any body should get a clandestine livelihood but themselves.

SCENE X

MRS. PEACHUM, PEACHUM, POLLY

POLLY. 'Twas only Nimming Ned.¹ He brought in a damask window-curtain, a hoop-petticoat, a pair of silver candlesticks, a perriwig, and one silk stocking from the fire that happen'd last night.

PEACHUM. There is not a fellow that is cleverer in his way, and saves more goods out of the fire than Ned. But now, Polly, to your affair; for matters must not be left as they are. You are married then, it seems?

POLLY. Yes, sir.

PEACHUM. And how do you propose to live, child?

POLLY. Like other women, sir, upon the industry of my husband.

MRS. PEACHUM. What, is the wench turn'd fool? A

² plate silver or gold tableware

¹ Nimming Ned from "nim," to steal; thus, Thieving Ned

highwayman's wife, like a soldier's, hath as little of his pay, as of his company.

PEACHUM. And had not you the common views of a gentlewoman in your marriage, Polly?

POLLY. I don't know what you mean, sir.

PEACHUM. Of a jointure,² and of being a widow.

POLLY. But I love him, sir: how then could I have thoughts of parting with him?

PEACHUM. Parting with him! Why, that is the whole scheme and intention of all marriage articles. The comfortable estate of widow-hood, is the only hope that keeps up a wife's spirits. Where is the woman who would scruple to be a wife, if she had it in her power to be a widow whenever she pleas'd? If you have any views of this sort, Polly, I shall think the match not so very unreasonable.

POLLY. How I dread to hear your advice! Yet I must beg you to explain yourself.

PEACHUM. Secure what he hath got, have him peach'd³ the next Sessions, and then at once you are made a rich widow.

POLLY. What, murder the man I love! The blood runs cold at my heart with the very thought of it.

PEACHUM. Fye, Polly! What hath murder to do in the affair? Since the thing sooner or later must happen, I dare say, the captain himself would like that we should get the reward for his death sooner than a stranger. Why, Polly, the captain knows, that as 'tis his employment to rob, so 'tis ours to take robbers; every man in his business. So that there is no malice in the case.

MRS. PEACHUM. Ay, husband, now you have nick'd the matter.⁴ To have him peach'd is the only thing could ever make me forgive her.

² jointure an estate settled by a husband on his wife for her support in the event of his death ³ peach'd impeached, betrayed for the reward money ⁴ nick'd the matter come to the heart of the matter

AIR XII. *Now ponder well, ye parents dear.*

POLLY. Oh, ponder well! be not severe;
 So save a wretched wife!
 For on the rope that hangs my dear
 Depends poor Polly's life.⁵

MRS. PEACHUM. But your duty to your parents, hussy, obliges you to hang him. What would many a wife give for such an opportunity!

POLLY. What is a jointure, what is widow-hood to me? I know my heart. I cannot survive him.

AIR XIII. *Le printemps rappelle aux armes.*

The turtle thus with plaintive crying,
 Her lover dying,
 The turtle thus with plaintive crying,
 Laments her dove.
 Down she drops quite spent with sighing,
 Pair'd in death, as pair'd in love.

Thus, sir, it will happen to your poor Polly.

MRS. PEACHUM. What, is the fool in love in earnest then? I hate thee for being particular:⁶ Why, wench, thou art a shame to thy very sex.

POLLY. But hear me, mother.—If you ever lov'd—

MRS. PEACHUM. Those cursed play-books she reads have been her ruin. One word more, hussy, and I shall knock your brains out, if you have any.

PEACHUM. Keep out of the way, Polly, for fear of mischief, and consider of what is propos'd to you.

MRS. PEACHUM. Away, hussy. Hang your husband, and be dutiful.

⁵ The outrageous play on the words "hangs" and "depends" should not be overlooked. ⁶particular different

SCENE XI

MRS. PEACHUM, PEACHUM

(POLLY *listening*)

MRS. PEACHUM. The thing, husband, must and shall be done. For the sake of intelligence¹ we must take other measures, and have him peach'd the next Session without her consent. If she will not know her duty, we know ours.

PEACHUM. But really, my dear, it grieves one's heart to take off a great man. When I consider his personal bravery, his fine stratagem,² how much we have already got by him, and how much more we may get, methinks I can't find it in my heart to have a hand in his death. I wish you could have made Polly undertake it.

MRS. PEACHUM. But in a case of necessity—our own lives are in danger.

PEACHUM. Then, indeed, we must comply with the customs of the world, and make gratitude give way to interest.—He shall be taken off.

MRS. PEACHUM. I'll undertake to manage Polly.

PEACHUM. And I'll prepare matters for the Old-Baily.

SCENE XII

POLLY

Now I'm a wretch, indeed.—Methinks I see him already in the cart, sweeter and more lovely than the nosegay in his hand!—I hear the crowd extolling his resolution and intrepidity!—What vollies of sighs are sent from the windows of Holborn,¹ that so comely a youth should be brought to disgrace!—I see him at the tree!² The whole circle are in tears!—even butchers

¹ For . . . intelligence to meet this situation ² stratagem skill in robbery

¹ Holborn slum district on the route to Tyburn ² tree gallows

weep!—Jack Ketch³ himself hesitates to perform his duty, and would be glad to lose his fee, by a reprieve. What then will become of Polly!—As yet I may inform him of their design, and aid him in his escape.—It shall be so.—But then he flies, absents himself, and I bar my self from his dear dear conversation! That too will distract me.—If he keep out of the way, my papa and mama may in time relent, and we may be happy.—If he stays, he is hang'd, and then he is lost for ever!—He intended to lye conceal'd in my room, 'till the dusk of the evening: if they are abroad, I'll this instant let him out, lest some accident should prevent him.

(*Exit, and returns*)

SCENE XIII

POLLY, MACHEATH

AIR XIV. *Pretty parrot, say, etc.*

MACHEATH. Pretty Polly, say,
When I was away,
Did your fancy never stray
To some newer lover?

POLLY. Without disguise,
Heaving sighs,
Doating eyes,
My constant heart discover.
Fondly let me loll!

MACHEATH. O pretty, pretty Poll.

POLLY. And are *you* as fond as ever, my dear?

MACHEATH. Suspect my honour, my courage, suspect any thing but my love.—May my pistols miss fire, and my mare slip her shoulder while I am pursu'd, if I ever forsake thee!

POLLY. Nay, my dear, I have no reason to doubt you, for I find in the romance you lent me, none of the great heroes were ever false in love.

³ Jack Ketch traditional name for the hangman

AIR XV. *Pray, fair one, be kind.*

MACHEATH. My heart was so free,
It rov'd like the bee,
'Till Polly my passion requited;
I sipt each flower,
I chang'd ev'ry hour,
But here ev'ry flower is united.

POLLY. Were you sentenc'd to transportation, sure,
my dear, you could not leave me behind you—could
you?

MACHEATH. Is there any power, any force that could
tear me from thee? You might sooner tear a pension
out of the hands of a courtier, a fee from a lawyer, a
pretty woman from a looking-glass, or any woman
from quadrille.—But to tear me from thee is impos-
sible!

AIR XVI. *Over the hills and far away.*

Were I laid on Greenland's coast,
And in my arms embrac'd my lass;
Warm amidst eternal frost,
Too soon the half year's night would pass.

POLLY. Were I sold on Indian soil,
Soon as the burning day was clos'd,
I could mock the sultry toil,
When on my charmer's breast repos'd.

MACHEATH. And I would love you all the day,

POLLY. Every night would kiss and play,

MACHEATH. If with me you'd fondly stray

POLLY. Over the hills and far away.

POLLY. Yes, I would go with thee. But oh!—how
shall I speak it? I must be torn from thee. We must
part.

MACHEATH. How! Part!

POLLY. We must, we must.—My papa and mama
are set against thy life. They now, even now are in
search after thee. They are preparing evidence against
thee. Thy life depends upon a moment.

AIR XVII. *Gin thou wert mine awn thing.*

O what pain it is to part!
 Can I leave thee, can I leave thee?
 O what pain it is to part!
 Can thy Polly ever leave thee?
 But lest death my love should thwart,
 And bring thee to the fatal cart,
 Thus I tear thee from my bleeding heart!
 Fly hence, and let me leave thee.

One kiss and then—one kiss—begone—farewell.

MACHEATH. My hand, my heart, my dear, is so riveted to thine, that I cannot unloose my hold.

POLLY. But my papa may intercept thee, and then I should lose the very glimmering of hope. A few weeks, perhaps, may reconcile us all. Shall thy Polly hear from thee?

MACHEATH. Must I go then?

POLLY. And will not absence change your love?

MACHEATH. If you doubt it, let me stay—and be hang'd.

POLLY. O how I fear! how I tremble!—Go—but when safety will give you leave, you will be sure to see me again; for 'till then Polly is wretched.

AIR XVIII. *O the broom, etc.*

(*Parting, and looking back at each other with fondness; he at one door, she at the other.*)

MACHEATH. The miser thus a shilling sees,
 Which he's oblig'd to pay,
 With sighs resigns it by degrees,
 And fears 'tis gone for aye.

POLLY. The boy, thus, when his sparrow's flown,
 The bird in silence eyes;
 But soon as out of sight 'tis gone,
 Whines, whimpers, sobs and cries.

Act II

SCENE I

A tavern near Newgate

JEMMY TWITCHER, CROOK-FINGERED JACK, WAT DREARY, ROBIN OF BAGSHOT, NIMMING NED, HENRY PADINGTON, MATT OF THE MINT, BEN BUDGE, *and the rest of the gang, at the table, with wine, brandy and tobacco.*¹

BEN. But pr'ythee, Matt, what is become of thy brother Tom? I have not seen him since my return from transportation.

MATT. Poor brother Tom had an accident this time twelve-month, and so clever a made fellow he was, that I could not save him from those fleaining² rascals the surgeons; and now, poor man, he is among the otamys³ at Surgeon's Hall.

BEN. So it seems, his time was come.

JEM. But the present time is ours, and no body alive hath more. Why are the laws levell'd at us? are we more dishonest than the rest of mankind? What we win, gentlemen, is our own by the law of arms, and the right of conquest.

CROOK. Where shall we find such another set of practical philosophers, who to a man are above the fear of death?

WAT. Sound men, and true!

ROBIN. Of try'd courage, and indefatigable industry!

NED. Who is there here that would not dye for his friend?

HARRY. Who is there here that would betray him for his interest?

¹ The colorful nicknames which Gay gives the members of the gang are only slight exaggerations of those common among the criminals of the day. See, for instance, "Newgate's Garland" (page 85.) ²fleaining from "flay," to skin or fleece ³otamys anatomies, skeletons

MATT. Show me a gang of courtiers that can say as much.

BEN. We are for a just partition of the world, for every man hath a right to enjoy life.

MATT. We retrench the superfluities of mankind. The world is avaritious, and I hate avarice. A covetous fellow, like a jack-daw, steals what he was never made to enjoy, for the sake of hiding it. These are the robbers of mankind, for money was made for the free-hearted and generous, and where is the injury of taking from another, what he hath not the heart to make use of?

JEM. Our several stations for the day are fixt. Good luck attend us all. Fill the glasses.

AIR XIX. Fill ev'ry glass, etc.

MATT. Fill ev'ry glass, for wine inspires us,
And fires us
With courage, love and joy.
Women and wine should life employ.
Is there ought else on earth desirous?

CHORUS. Fill ev'ry glass, etc.

SCENE II

(*To them enter MACHEATH*)

MACHEATH. Gentlemen, well met. My heart hath been with you this hour; but an unexpected affair hath detain'd me. No ceremony, I beg you.

MATT. We were just breaking up to go upon duty. Am I to have the honour of taking the air with you, sir, this evening upon the Heath? I drink a dram now and then with the stage-coachmen in the way of friendship and intelligence; and I know that about this time there will be passengers upon the Western Road who are worth speaking with.

MACHEATH. I was to have been of that party—but—

MATT. But what, sir?

MACHEATH. Is there any man who suspects my courage?

MATT. We have all been witnesses of it.

MACHEATH. My honour and truth to the gang?

MATT. I'll be answerable for it.

MACHEATH. In the division of our booty, have I ever shown the least marks of avarice or injustice?

MATT. By these questions something seems to have ruffled you. Are any of us suspected?

MACHEATH. I have a fixt confidence, gentlemen, in you all, as men of honour, and as such I value and respect you. Peachum is a man that is useful to us.

MATT. Is he about to play us any foul play? I'll shoot him through the head.

MACHEATH. I beg you, gentlemen, act with conduct and discretion. A pistol is your last resort.

MATT. He knows nothing of this meeting.

MACHEATH. Business cannot go on without him. He is a man who knows the world, and is a necessary agent to us. We have had a slight difference, and till it is accommodated I shall be oblig'd to keep out of his way. Any private dispute of mine shall be of no ill consequence to my friends. You must continue to act under his direction, for the moment we break loose from him, our gang is ruin'd.¹

MATT. As a bawd² to a whore, I grant you, he is to us of great convenience.

MACHEATH. Make him believe I have quitted the gang, which I can never do but with life. At our private quarters I will continue to meet you. A week or so will probably reconcile us.

MATT. Your instructions shall be observ'd. 'Tis now high time for us to repair to our several duties; so till the evening at our quarters in Moor-fields³ we bid you farewell.

¹ a parable of the political situation in England: George II, like Macheath, is the nominal ruler but Walpole, like Peachum, controls the purse strings and is the real power ² bawd procurer

³ Moor-fields recreation grounds near London, used by highwaymen as a meeting place

MACHEATH. I shall wish my self with you. Success attend you.

(*Sits down melancholy at the table*)

AIR XX. *March in Rinaldo,⁴ with drums and trumpets.*

MATT. Let us take the road.

Hark! I hear the sound of coaches!
The hour of attack approaches,
To your arms, brave boys, and load.
See the ball I hold!
Let the chymists⁵ toil like asses,
Our fire their fire surpasses,
And turns all our lead to gold.

(*The gang, rang'd in the front of the stage, load their pistols, and stick them under their girdles; then go off singing the first part in chorus.*)

SCENE III

MACHEATH, DRAWER

MACHEATH. What a fool is a fond wench! Polly is most confoundedly bit.—I love the sex. And a man who loves money, might as well be contented with one guinea, as I with one woman. The town perhaps hath been as much oblig'd to me, for recruiting it with free-hearted ladies, as to any recruiting officer in the army.¹ If it were not for us and the other gentlemen of the sword, Drury-Lane would be uninhabited.

AIR XXI. *Would you have a young virgin, etc.*

If the heart of a man is deprest with cares,
The mist is dispell'd when a woman appears;
Like the notes of a fiddle, she sweetly, sweetly
Raises the spirits, and charms our ears.
Roses and lillies her cheeks disclose,

⁴ Rinaldo an opera by Handel ⁵ chymists alchemists. The gang does a better job of turning lead to gold

¹ recruiting officer . . . army the recruiting officer enlists soldiers who, in turn, attract camp followers

But her ripe lips are more sweet than those.
Press her,
Caress her,
With blisses,
Her kisses
Dissolve us in pleasure, and soft repose.

I must have women. There is nothing unbends the mind like them. Money is not so strong a cordial for the time.—Drawer.—(*Enter Drawer*) Is the porter gone for all the ladies, according to my directions?

DRAWER. I expect him back every minute. But you know, sir, you sent him as far as Hockley in the Hole, for three of the ladies, for one in Vinegar Yard, and for the rest of them somewhere about Lewkner's Lane.² Sure some of them are below, for I hear the bar bell. As they come I will show them up.—Coming, coming.

SCENE IV

MACHEATH, MRS. COAXER, DOLLY TRULL, MRS. VIXEN,
BETTY DOXY, JENNY DIVER, MRS. SLAMMEKIN, SUKY
TAWDRY, and MOLLY BRAZEN

MACHEATH. Dear Mrs. Coaxer, you are welcome. You look charmingly to-day. I hope you don't want¹ the repairs of quality, and lay on paint—Dolly Trull! kiss me, you slut; are you as amorous as ever, hussy? You are always so taken up with stealing hearts, that you don't allow your self time to steal any thing else.—Ah Dolly, thou wilt ever be a coquette!—Mrs. Vixen, I'm yours, I always lov'd a woman of wit and spirit; they make charming mistresses, but plaguy wives.—Betty Doxy! Come hither, hussy. Do you drink as hard as ever? You had better stick to good wholesome beer; for in troth, Betty, strong-waters² will in time ruin your constitution. You should leave those to your

² Hockley, Vinegar Yard, Lewkner's Lane all disreputable districts

¹ want require ² strong-waters hard liquor

betters.—What! and my pretty Jenny Diver too! As prim and demure as ever! There is not any prude, though ever so high bred, hath a more sanctify'd look, with a more mischievous heart. Ah! thou art a dear artful hypocrite.—Mrs. Slammekin! as careless and genteel as ever! all you fine ladies, who know your own beauty, affect an undress³—but see, here's Suky Tawdry come to contradict what I was saying. Every thing she gets one way she lays out upon her back. Why, Suky, you must keep at least a dozen tally-men.⁴ Molly Brazen! (*She kisses him.*) That's well done, I love a free-hearted wench. Thou hast a most agreeable assurance, girl, and art as willing as a turtle.—But hark! I hear musick. The harper is at the door. *If musick be the food of love, play on.*⁵ E'er you seat your selves, ladies, what think you of a dance? Come in. (*Enter harper*) Play the French tune, that Mrs. Slammekin was so fond of.

(*A dance à la ronde in the French manner; near the end of it this song and chorus*)

AIR XXII. *Cotillon.*

Youth's the season made for joys,
Love is then our duty;
She alone who that employs,
Well deserves her beauty.
Let's be gay,
While we may,
Beauty's a flower despis'd in decay.
Youth's the season, etc.

Let us drink and sport to-day,
Ours is not to-morrow.
Love with youth flies swift away,
Age is nought but sorrow.
Dance and sing,
Time's on the wing,

³ undress informal dress ⁴keep . . . tally-men keep a dozen installment merchants in business ⁵The first line of *Twelfth Night*

Life never knows the return of spring.
CHORUS. Let us drink, etc.

MACHEATH. Now, pray ladies, take your places. Here, fellow. (*Pays the harper*) Bid the drawer bring us more wine. (*Exit harper*) If any of the ladies chuse gin, I hope they will be so free to call for it.

JENNY. You look as if you meant me. Wine is strong enough for me. Indeed, sir, I never drink strong-waters, but when I have the cholic.

MACHEATH. Just the excuse of the fine ladies! Why, a lady of quality is never without the cholic. I hope, Mrs. Coaxer, you have had good success of late in your visits among the mercers.⁶

COAXER. We have so many interlopers—Yet with industry, one may still have a little picking. I carried a silver-flower'd lutestring and a piece of black padesoy⁷ to Mr. Peachum's lock but last week.

VIXEN. There's Molly Brazen hath the ogle of a rattlesnake. She rivitted a linnen-draper's eye so fast upon her, that he was nick'd of three pieces of cambric⁸ before he could look off.

BRAZEN. O dear madam!—But sure nothing can come up to your handling of laces! And then you have such a sweet deluding tongue! To cheat a man is nothing; but the woman must have fine parts⁹ indeed who cheats a woman!

VIXEN. Lace, madam lyes in a small compass, and is of easy conveyance. But you are apt, madam, to think too well of your friends.

COAXER. If any woman hath more art than another, to be sure, 'tis Jenny Diver. Though her fellow be never so agreeable, she can pick his pocket as coolly, as if money were her only pleasure. Now that is a command of the passions uncommon in a woman!

JENNY. I never go to the tavern with a man, but in

⁶ mercers dry goods merchants ⁷ lutestring . . . padesoy expensive fabrics ⁸ nick'd . . . cambric "relieved of" three pieces of fine linen. Molly, Mrs. Vixen and Mrs. Coaxer are shoplifters ⁹ fine parts shrewdness

the view of business. I have other hours, and other sort of men for my pleasure. But had I your address, madam—

MACHEATH. Have done with your compliments, ladies; and drink about: You are not so fond of me, Jenny, as you used to be.

JENNY. 'Tis not convenient, sir, to show my fondness among so many rivals. 'Tis your own choice, and not the warmth of my inclination, that will determine you.

AIR XXIII. *All in a misty morning.*

Before the barn-door crowing,
The cock by hens attended,
His eyes around him throwing,
Stands for a while suspended.
Then one he singles from the crew,
And cheers the happy hen;
With how do you do, and how do you do,
And how do you do again.

MACHEATH. Ah Jenny! thou art a dear slut.

TRULL. Pray, madam, were you ever in keeping?

TAWDRY. I hope, madam, I hasn't been so long upon the town, but I have met with some good fortune as well as my neighbours.

TRULL. Pardon me, madam, I meant no harm by the question; 'twas only in the way of conversation.

TAWDRY. Indeed, madam, if I had not been a fool, I might have liv'd very handsomely with my last friend. But upon his missing five guineas, he turn'd me off. Now I never suspected he had counted them.

SLAMMEKIN. Who do you look upon, madam, as your best sort of keepers?

TRULL. That, madam, is thereafter as they be.

SLAMMEKIN. I, madam, was once kept by a Jew; and bating¹⁰ their religion, to women they are a good sort of people.

¹⁰ bating excluding

TAWDY. Now for my part, I own I like an old fellow: for we always make them pay for what they can't do.

VIXEN. A spruce prentice, let me tell you, ladies, is no ill thing, they bleed freely. I have sent at least two or three dozen of them in my time to the plantations.¹¹

JENNY. But to be sure, sir, with so much good fortune as you have had upon the road, you must be grown immensely rich.

MACHEATH. The road, indeed, hath done me justice, but the gaming-table hath been my ruin.

AIR XXIV. When once I lay with another man's wife.

JENNY. The gamesters and lawyers are jugglers alike,
If they meddle your all is in danger:
Like gypsies, if once they can finger a souse,¹²
Your pockets they pick, and they pilfer your house,
And give your estate to a stranger.

A man of courage should never put any thing to the risque, but his life. These are the tools of a man of honour. Cards and dice are only fit for cowardly cheats, who prey upon their friends.

(*She takes up his pistol. TAWDRY takes up the other.*)

TAWDY. This, sir, is fitter for your hand. Besides your loss of money, 'tis a loss to the ladies. Gaming takes you off from women. How fond could I be of you! but before company, 'tis ill bred.

MACHEATH. Wanton hussies!

JENNY. I must and will have a kiss to give my wine a zest.

(*They take him about the neck, and make signs to PEACHUM and Constables, who rush in upon him.*)

¹¹ A spruce prentice . . . plantations an apprentice lavishly spends money stolen from his master and when caught, is transported ¹² souse sou

SCENE V

(*To them PEACHUM and Constables*)

PEACHUM. I seize you, sir, as my prisoner.

MACHEATH. Was this well done, Jenny?—Women are decoy ducks; who can trust them! Beasts, jades, jilts, harpies, furies, whores!

PEACHUM. Your case, Mr. Macheath, is not particular. The greatest heroes have been ruin'd by women. But, to do them justice, I must own they are a pretty sort of creatures, if we could trust them. You must now, sir, take your leave of the ladies, and if they have a mind to make you a visit, they will be sure to find you at home. The gentleman, ladies, lodges in Newgate. Constables, wait upon the captain to his lodgings.

AIR XXV. *When first I laid siege to my Chloris.*

MACHEATH. At the tree I shall suffer with pleasure,
At the tree I shall suffer with pleasure,
Let me go where I will,
In all kinds of ill,
I shall find no such furies as these are.

PEACHUM. Ladies, I'll take care the reckoning shall be discharg'd.

(*Exeunt MACHEATH, guarded with PEACHUM and Constables*)

SCENE VI

(*The women remain*)

VIXEN. Look ye, Mrs. Jenny, though Mr. Peachum may have made a private bargain with you and Suky Tawdry for betraying the captain, as we were all assisting, we ought all to share alike.

COAXER. I think Mr. Peachum, after so long an acquaintance, might have trusted me as well as Jenny Diver.

SLAMMEKIN. I am sure at least three men of his hanging, and in a year's time too, (if he did me justice) should be set down to my account.

TRULL. Mrs. Slammekin, that is not fair. For you know one of them was taken in bed with me.

JENNY. As far as a bowl of punch or a treat, I believe Mrs. Suky will join with me.—As for any thing else, ladies, you cannot in conscience expect it.

SLAMMEKIN. Dear madam—

TRULL. I would not for the world—

SLAMMEKIN. 'Tis impossible for me—

TRULL. As I hope to be sav'd, madam—

SLAMMEKIN. Nay, then I must stay here all night—

TRULL. Since you command me.

(Exeunt with great ceremony)

SCENE VII

Newgate

LOCKIT, *Turnkeys, MACHEATH, Constables*

LOCKIT. Noble captain, you are welcome. You have not been a lodger of mine this year and half. You know the custom, sir. Garnish,¹ captain, garnish. Hand me down those fetters there.

MACHEATH. Those, Mr. Lockit, seem to be the heaviest of the whole set. With your leave, I should like the further pair better.

LOCKIT. Look ye, captain, we know what is fittest for our prisoners. When a gentleman uses me with civility, I always do the best I can to please him—Hand them down I say—We have them of all prices, from one guinea to ten, and 'tis fitting every gentleman should please himself.

MACHEATH. I understand you, sir. *(Gives money)* The fees here are so many, and so exorbitant, that few fortunes can bear the expence of getting off handsomly, or of dying like a gentleman.

¹ Garnish a bribe to insure better treatment

LOCKIT. Those, I see, will fit the captain better.—Take down the further pair. Do but examine them, sir—never was better work.—How genteely they are made!—They will fit as easy as a glove, and the nicest man in England might not be ashamed to wear them. (*He puts on the chains.*) If I had the best gentleman in the land in my custody I could not equip him more handsomly. And so, sir—I now leave you to your private meditations.

SCENE VIII

MACHEATH

AIR XXVI. *Courtiers, courtiers think it no harm.*

Man may escape from rope and gun;
 Nay, some have out-liv'd the doctor's pill:
 Who takes a woman must be undone,
 That basilisk¹ is sure to kill.
 The fly that sips treacle is lost in the sweets,
 So he that tastes woman, woman, woman,
 He that tastes woman, ruin meets.

To what a woful plight have I brought my self! Here must I (all day long, 'till I am hang'd) be confin'd to hear the reproaches of a wench who lays her ruin at my door.—I am in the custody of her father, and to be sure if he knows of the matter, I shall have a fine time on't betwixt this and my execution.—But I promis'd the wench marriage.—What signifies a promise to a woman? does not man in marriage itself promise a hundred things that he never means to perform? Do all we can, women will believe us; for they look upon a promise as an excuse for following their own inclinations.—But here comes Lucy, and I cannot get from her—wou'd I were deaf!

¹ basilisk a mythical serpent whose very look was deadly

SCENE IX

MACHEATH, LUCY

LUCY. You base man, you,—how can you look me in the face after what hath past between us?—See here, perfidious wretch, how I am forc'd to bear about the load of infamy you have laid upon me—O Macheath! thou hast robb'd me of my quiet—to see thee tortur'd would give me pleasure.

AIR XXVII. *A lovely lass to a friar came.*

Thus when a good huswife sees a rat
 In her trap in the morning taken,
 With pleasure her heart goes pit a pat,
 In revenge for her loss of bacon.
 Then she throws him
 To the dog or cat,
 To be worried, crush'd and shaken.

MACHEATH. Have you no bowels, no tenderness, my dear Lucy, to see a husband in these circumstances?

LUCY. A husband!

MACHEATH. In ev'ry respect but the form, and that, my dear, may be said over us at any time.—Friends should not insist upon ceremonies. From a man of honour, his word is as good as his bond.

LUCY. 'Tis the pleasure of all you fine men to insult the women you have ruin'd.

AIR XXVIII. *'Twas when the sea was roaring.¹*

How cruel are the traytors,
 Who lye and swear in jest,
 To cheat unguarded creatures

¹ an instance of Gay's borrowing from himself. This ballad, with music attributed to Handel, first appeared in Gay's play, *The What D'ye Call It* (1715), and had become a popular favorite. So, too, the music for Air XXXIV ("Thus when the swallow, seeking prey") was originally written for Gay's ballad, *Sweet William's Farewell to Black-Ey'd Susan* (1720)

Of virtue, fame, and rest!
 Whoever steals a shilling,
 Thro' shame the guilt conceals:
 In love the perjur'd villain
 With boasts the theft reveals.

MACHEATH. The very first opportunity, my dear, (have but patience) you shall be my wife in whatever manner you please.

LUCY. Insinuating monster! And so you think I know nothing of the affair of Miss Polly Peachum.—I could tear thy eyes out!

MACHEATH. Sure Lucy, you can't be such a fool as to be jealous of Polly!

LUCY. Are you not married to her, you brute, you?

MACHEATH. Married! Very good. The wench gives it out only to vex thee, and to ruin me in thy good opinion. 'Tis true, I go to the house; I chat with the girl, I kiss her, I say a thousand things to her (as all gentlemen do) that mean nothing, to divert my self; and now the silly jade hath set it about that I am married to her, to let me know what she would be at. Indeed, my dear Lucy, these violent passions may be of ill consequence to a woman in your condition.

LUCY. Come, come, captain, for all your assurance, you know that Miss Polly hath put it out of your power to do me the justice you promis'd me.

MACHEATH. A jealous woman believes ev'ry thing her passion suggests. To convince you of my sincerity, if we can find the ordinary, I shall have no scruples of making you my wife; and I know the consequence of having two at a time.

LUCY. That you are only to be hang'd, and so get rid of them both.

MACHEATH. I am ready, my dear Lucy, to give you satisfaction—if you think there is any in marriage.—What can a man of honour say more?

LUCY. So then it seems, you are not married to Miss Polly?

MACHEATH. You know, Lucy, the girl is prodigiously

conceited. No man can say a civil thing to her, but (like other fine ladies) her vanity makes her think he's her own for ever and ever.

AIR XXIX. *The sun had loos'd his weary teams.*

The first time at the looking-glass
 The mother sets her daughter,
 The image strikes the smiling lass
 With self-love ever after.
 Each time she looks, she, fonder grown,
 Thinks ev'ry charm grows stronger:
 But alas, vain maid, all eyes but your own
 Can see you are not younger.

When women consider their own beauties, they are all alike unreasonable in their demands; for they expect their lovers should like them as long as they like themselves.

LUCY. Yonder is my father—perhaps this way we may light upon the ordinary, who shall try if you will be as good as your word.—For I long to be made an honest woman.

SCENE X

PEACHUM, LOCKIT *with an account-book*

LOCKIT. In this last affair, brother Peachum, we are agreed. You have consented to go halves in Macheath.

PEACHUM. We shall never fall out about an execution.—But as to that article, pray how stands our last year's account?

LOCKIT. If you will run your eye over it, you'll find 'tis fair and clearly stated.

PEACHUM. This long arrear of the government is very hard upon us!¹ Can it be expected that we should hang our acquaintance for nothing, when our betters will hardly save theirs without being paid for it. Un-

¹ The government is in arrears on payments of rewards for criminals whom Peachum and Lockit have betrayed

less the people in employment² pay better, I promise them for the future, I shall let other rogues live besides their own.

LOCKIT. Perhaps, brother, they are afraid these matters may be carried too far. We are treated too by them with contempt, as if our profession were not reputable.

PEACHUM. In one respect indeed, our employment may be reckon'd dishonest, because, like great statesmen, we encourage those who betray their friends.

LOCKIT. Such language, brother, any where else, might turn to your prejudice. Learn to be more guarded, I beg you.

AIR XXX. *How happy are we, etc.*

When you censure the age,
Be cautious and sage,
Lest the courtiers offended should be:
If you mention vice or bribe,
'Tis so pat to all the tribe;
Each cries—That was levell'd at me.

PEACHUM. Here's poor Ned Clincher's name, I see. Sure, brother Lockit, there was a little unfair proceeding in Ned's case: for he told me in the condemn'd hold, that for value receiv'd, you had promis'd him a Session or two longer without molestation.

LOCKIT. Mr. Peachum,—this is the first time my honour was ever call'd in question.

PEACHUM. Business is at an end—if once we act dishonourably.

LOCKIT. Who accuses me?

PEACHUM. You are warm, brother.

LOCKIT. He that attacks my honour, attacks my livelyhood.—And this usage—sir—is not to be born.

PEACHUM. Since you provoke me to speak—I must tell you too, that Mrs. Coaxer charges you with defrauding her of her information-money, for the ap-

² people in employment government officials

prehending of curl-pated Hugh. Indeed, indeed, brother, we must punctually pay our spies, or we shall have no information.

LOCKIT. Is this language to me, sirrah—who have sav'd you from the gallows, sirrah! (*Collaring each other*)

PEACHUM. If I am hang'd, it shall be for ridding the world of an arrant rascal.

LOCKIT. This hand shall do the office of the halter,⁸ you deserve, and throttle you—you dog!

PEACHUM. Brother, brother,—we are both in the wrong—we shall be both losers in the dispute—for you know we have it in our power to hang each other. You should not be so passionate.

LOCKIT. Nor you so provoking.

PEACHUM. 'Tis our mutual interest; 'tis for the interest of the world we should agree. If I said any thing, brother, to the prejudice of your character, I ask pardon.

LOCKIT. Brother Peachum—I can forgive as well as resent.—Give me your hand. Suspicion does not become a friend.

PEACHUM. I only meant to give you occasion to justifie yourself: But I must now step home, for I expect the gentleman about this snuff-box, that Filch nimm'd two nights ago in the park. I appointed him at this hour.

SCENE XI

LOCKIT, LUCY

LOCKIT. Whence come you, hussy?

LUCY. My tears might answer that question.

LOCKIT. You have then been whimpering and fondling, like a spaniel, over the fellow that hath abus'd you.

LUCY. One can't help love; one can't cure it. 'Tis not in my power to obey you and hate him.

⁸ halter hangman's rope

LOCKIT. Learn to bear your husband's death like a reasonable woman. 'Tis not the fashion, now-a-days, so much as to affect sorrow upon these occasions. No woman would every marry, if she had not the chance of mortality for a release. Act like a woman of spirit, hussy, and thank your father for what he is doing.

AIR XXXI. *Of a noble race was Shenkin.*

LUCY. Is then his fate decreed, sir?
 Such a man can I think of quitting?
 When first we met, so moves me yet,
 O see how my heart is splitting!

LOCKIT. Look ye, Lucy—there is no saving him.—So, I think, you must ev'n do like other widows—buy your self weeds, and be cheerful.

AIR XXXII.

You'll think, e'er many days ensue,
 This sentence not severe;
 I hang your husband, child, 'tis true,
 But with him hang your care.
 Twang dang dillo dee.

Like a good wife, go moan over your dying husband. That, child, is your duty—consider, girl, you can't have the man and the money too—so make yourself as easy as you can by getting all you can from him.

SCENE XII

LUCY, MACHEATH

LUCY. Though the ordinary was out of the way to-day, I hope, my dear, you will, upon the first opportunity, quiet my scruples—Oh sir!—my father's hard heart is not to be soften'd, and I am in the utmost despair.

MACHEATH. But if I could raise a small sum—would not twenty guineas, think you, move him?—Of all the arguments in the way of business, the perquisite is the most prevailing.—Your father's perquisites for the

escape of prisoners must amount to a considerable sum in the year. Money well tim'd, and properly apply'd, will do any thing.

AIR XXXIII. *London ladies.*

If you at an office solicit your due,
And would not have matters neglected;
You must quicken the clerk with the perquisite too,
To do what his duty directed.
Or would you the frowns of a lady prevent,
She too has this palpable failing,
The perquisite softens her into consent;
That reason with all is prevailing.

LUCY. What love or money can do shall be done: for all my comfort depends upon your safety.

SCENE XIII

LUCY, MACHEATH, POLLY

POLLY. Where is my dear husband?—Was a rope ever intended for this neck!—O let me throw my arms about it, and throttle thee with love!—Why dost thou turn away from me?—'Tis thy Polly—'tis thy wife.

MACHEATH. Was ever such an unfortunate rascal as I am!

LUCY. Was there ever such another villain!

POLLY. O Macheath! was it for this we parted? Taken! Imprison'd! Try'd! Hang'd!—cruel reflection! I'll stay with thee 'till death—no force shall tear thy dear wife from thee now.—What means my love?—Not one kind word! not one kind look! think what thy Polly suffers to see thee in this condition.

AIR XXXIV. *All in the Downs, etc.*

Thus when the swallow, seeking prey,
Within the sash is closely pent,
His consort with bemoaning lay,
Without sits pining for th' event.
Her chatt'ring lovers all around her skim;
She heeds them not (poor bird) her soul's with him.

MACHEATH. I must disown her. (*Aside*) The wench is distracted.

LUCY. Am I then bilk'd of my virtue? Can I have no reparation? Sure men were born to lye, and women to believe them! O villain! Villain!

POLLY. Am I not thy wife?—Thy neglect of me, thy aversion to me too severely proves it.—Look on me.—Tell me, am I not thy wife?

LUCY. Perfidious wretch!

POLLY. Barbarous husband!

LUCY. Hadst thou been hang'd five months ago, I had been happy.

POLLY. And I too—if you had been kind to me 'till death, it would not have vex'd me—And that's no very unreasonable request, (though from a wife) to a man who hath not above seven or eight days to live.

LUCY. Art thou then married to another? Hast thou two wives, monster?

MACHEATH. If women's tongues can cease for an answer—hear me.

LUCY. I won't.—Flesh and blood can't bear my usage.

POLLY. Shall I not claim my own? Justice bids me speak.

AIR XXXV. *Have you heard of a frolicksome ditty.*

MACHEATH. How happy could I be with either,
Were t'other dear charmer away!
But while you thus tease me together,
To neither a word will I say;
But tol de rol, etc.

POLLY. Sure, my dear, there ought to be some preference shown to a wife! At least she may claim the appearance of it. He must be distracted with his misfortunes, or he cou'd not use me thus!

LUCY. O villain, villain! thou hast deceiv'd me—I could even inform against thee with pleasure. Not a prude wishes more heartily to have facts against her **intimate** acquaintance, than I now wish to have facts

against thee. I would have her satisfaction, and they should all out.

AIR XXXVI. *Irish trot.*

POLLY. I'm bubbled.

LUCY. —I'm bubbled.

POLLY. Oh how I am troubled!

LUCY. Bambouzed, and bit! ¹

POLLY. —My distresses are doubled.

LUCY. When you come to the tree, should the hangman refuse, These fingers, with pleasure, could fasten the noose.

POLLY. I'm bubbled, etc.

MACHEATH. Be pacified, my dear Lucy—This is all a fetch² of Polly's to make me desperate with you in case I get off. If I am hang'd, she would fain have the credit of being thought my widow—Really, Polly, this is no time for a dispute of this sort; for whenever you are talking of marriage, I am thinking of hanging.

POLLY. And hast thou the heart to persist in disowning me?

MACHEATH. And hast thou the heart to persist in persuading me that I am married? Why, Polly, dost thou seek to aggravate my misfortunes?

LUCY. Really, Miss Peachum, you but expose yourself. Besides, 'tis barbarous in you to worry a gentleman in his circumstances.

AIR XXXVII.

POLLY. Cease your funning;

Force or cunning

Never shall my heart trapan.³

All these sallies

Are but malice

To seduce my constant man.

'Tis most certain,

By their flirting

Women oft have envy shown:

¹ bubbled . . . bit cheated ² fetch trick ³ trapan trepan, deceive

Pleas'd, to ruin
Others wooing;
Never happy in their own!

POLLY. Decency, madam, methinks might teach you to behave yourself with some reserve with the husband, while his wife is present.

MACHEATH. But seriously, Polly, this is carrying the joke a little too far.

LUCY. If you are determin'd, madam, to raise a disturbance in the prison, I shall be oblig'd to send for the turnkey to shew you the door. I am sorry, madam, you force me to be so ill-bred.

POLLY. Give me leave to tell you, madam; these forward airs don't become you in the least, madam. And my duty, madam, obliges me to stay with my husband, madam.

AIR XXXVIII. *Good-morrow, gossip Joan.*

LUCY. Why how now, madam flirt?

POLLY. Why how now, saucy jade;

Sure the wench is tipsy!

How can you see me made

(To him)

The scoff of such a gipsy?

saucy jade!

(To her)

SCENE XIV

LUCY, MACHEATH, POLLY, PEACHUM

PEACHUM. Where's my wench? Ah hussy! hussy!—
Come you home, you slut; and when your fellow is
hang'd, hang yourself, to make your family some
amends.

POLLY. Dear, dear father, do not tear me from him—I must speak; I have more to say to him—Oh! twist

thy fetters about me, that he may not haul me from thee!

PEACHUM. Sure all women are alike! If ever they commit the folly, they are sure to commit another by exposing themselves—Away—Not a word more—You are my prisoner now, hussy.

AIR XXXIX. *Irish howl.*

POLLY. No power on earth can e'er divide
The knot that sacred love hath ty'd.
When parents draw against our mind,
The true-love's knot they faster bind.
Oh, oh ray, oh amborah—oh, oh, etc.

(*Holding MACHEATH, PEACHUM pulling her*)

SCENE XV

LUCY, MACHEATH

MACHEATH. I am naturally compassionate, wife; so that I could not use the wench as she deserv'd; which made you at first suspect there was something in what she said.

LUCY. Indeed, my dear, I was strangely puzzled.

MACHEATH. If that had been the case, her father would never have brought me into this circumstance—No, Lucy,—I had rather dye than be false to thee.

LUCY. How happy am I, if you say this from your heart! For I love thee so, that I could sooner bear to see thee hang'd than in the arms of another.

MACHEATH. But couldst thou bear to see me hang'd?

LUCY. O Macheath, I can never live to see that day.

MACHEATH. You see, Lucy, in the account of love you are in my debt; and you must now be convinc'd, that I rather chuse to die than be another's.—Make me, if possible, love thee more, and let me owe my life to thee—If you refuse to assist me, Peachum and your father will immediately put me beyond all means of escape.

LUCY. My father, I know, hath been drinking hard

with the prisoners: and I fancy he is now taking his nap in his own room—If I can procure the keys, shall I go off with thee, my dear?

MACHEATH. If we are together, 'twill be impossible to lye conceal'd. As soon as the search begins to be a little cool, I will send to thee—'Till then my heart is thy prisoner.

LUCY. Come then, my dear husband—owe thy life to me—and though you love me not—be grateful—But that Polly runs in my head strangely.

MACHEATH. A moment of time may make us unhappy for-ever.

AIR XL. *The lass of Patie's mill.*

LUCY. I like the fox shall grieve,
Whose mate hath left her side,
Whom hounds, from morn to eve,
Chase o'er the country wide.
Where can my lover hide?
Where cheat the wary pack?
If love be not his guide,
He never will come back!

Act III

SCENE I

Newgate

LOCKIT, LUCY

LOCKIT. To be sure, wench, you must have been aiding and abetting to help him to this escape.

LUCY. Sir, here hath been Peachum and his daughter, Polly, and to be sure they know the ways of Newgate as well as if they had been born and bred in the place all their lives. Why must all your suspicion light upon me?

LOCKIT. Lucy, Lucy, I will have none of these shuffling answers.

LUCY. Well then—if I know any thing of him I wish I may be burnt!

LOCKIT. Keep your temper, Lucy, or I shall pronounce you guilty.

LUCY. Keep yours, sir,—I do wish I may be burnt. I do—And what can I say more to convince you?

LOCKIT. Did he tip handsomely?—How much did he come down with? Come hussy, don't cheat your father; and I shall not be angry with you—Perhaps, you have made a better bargain with him than I could have done—How much, my good girl?

LUCY. You know, sir, I am fond of him, and would have given money to have kept him with me.

LOCKIT. Ah Lucy! thy education might have put thee more upon thy guard; for a girl in the bar of an ale-house is always besieg'd.

LUCY. Dear sir, mention not my education—for 'twas to that I owe my ruin.

AIR XLI. If love's a sweet passion, etc.

When young at the bar you first taught me to score,¹
And bid me be free of my lips, and no more;
I was kiss'd by the parson, the squire, and the sot:
When the guest was departed, the kiss was forgot.
But his kiss was so sweet, and so closely he prest,
That I languish'd and pin'd 'till I granted the rest.

If you can forgive me, sir, I will make a fair confession, for to be sure he hath been a most barbarous villain to me.

LOCKIT. And so you have let him escape, hussy—have you?

LUCY. When a woman loves; a kind look, a tender word can persuade her to any thing—and I could ask no other bribe.

LOCKIT. Thou wilt always be a vulgar slut, Lucy—if you would not be look'd upon as a fool, you should

¹ **score** keep count of drinks served

never do any thing but upon the foot of interest. Those that act otherwise are their own bubbles.²

LUCY. But love, sir, is a misfortune that may happen to the most discreet woman, and in love we are all fools alike.—Notwithstanding all he swore, I am now fully convinc'd that Polly Peachum is actually his wife.—Did I let him escape, (fool that I was!) to go to her?—Polly will wheedle her self into his money, and then Peachum will hang him, and cheat us both.

LOCKIT. So I am to be ruin'd, because, forsooth, you must be in love!—a very pretty excuse!

LUCY. I could murder that impudent happy strumpet:—I gave him his life, and that creature enjoys the sweets of it.—Ungrateful Macheath!

AIR XLII. *South-sea Ballad.*

My love is all madness and folly,
Alone I lye,
Toss, tumble, and cry,
What a happy creature is Polly!
Was e'er such a wretch as I!
With rage I redden like scarlet,
That my dear inconstant varlet,
Stark blind to my charms,
Is lost in the arms
Of that jilt, that inveigling harlot!
Stark blind to my charms,
Is lost in the arms
Of that jilt, that inveigling harlot!
This, this my resentment alarms.

LOCKIT. And so, after all this mischief, I must stay here to be entertain'd with your catterwauling, mistress Puss!—Out of my sight, wanton strumpet! you shall fast and mortify yourself into reason, with now and then a little handsome discipline to bring you to your senses.—Go.

² bubbles dupes

SCENE II

LOCKIT

Peachum then intends to outwit me in this affair; but I'll be even with him.—The dog is leaky in his liquor, so I'll ply him that way, get the secret from him, and turn this affair to my own advantage.—Lions, wolves, and vulturs don't live together in herds, droves or flocks.—Of all animals of prey, man is the only sociable one. Every one of us preys upon his neighbour, and yet we herd together.—Peachum is my companion, my friend—According to the custom of the world, indeed, he may quote thousands of precedents for cheating me—And shall not I make use of the privilege of friendship to make him a return?

AIR XLIII. *Packington's Pound.*

Thus gamesters united in friendship are found,
Though they know that their industry all is a cheat;
They flock to their prey at the dice-box's sound,
And join to promote one another's deceit.
But if by mishap
They fail of a chap,¹
To keep in their hands, they each other entrap.
Like pikes, lank with hunger, who miss of their ends,
They bite their companions, and prey on their friends.

Now, Peachum, you and I, like honest tradesmen, are to have a fair tryal which of us two can over-reach the other.—Lucy.—(Enter Lucy) Are there any of Peachum's people now in the house?

LUCY. Filch, sir, is drinking a quartern of strong-waters in the next room with Black Moll.

LOCKIT. Bid him come to me.

¹ fail . . . chap lack a victim

SCENE III

LOCKIT, FILCH

LOCKIT. Why, boy, thou lookest as if thou wert half starv'd; like a shotten herring.¹

FILCH. One had need have the constitution of a horse to go through the business.—Since the favourite child-getter was disabled by a mis-hap, I have pick'd up a little money by helping the ladies to a pregnancy against their being call'd down to sentence.—But if a man cannot get an honest livelihood any easier way, I am sure, 'tis what I can't undertake for another Session.

LOCKIT. Truly, if that great man should tip off,² 'twould be an irreparable loss. The vigor and prowess of a knight-errant never sav'd half the ladies in distress that he hath done.—But, boy, can'st thou tell me where thy master is to be found?

FILCH. At his lock, sir, at the Crooked Billet.

LOCKIT. Very well.—I have nothing more with you. (Ex. Filch) I'll go to him there, for I have many important affairs to settle with him; and in the way of those transactions, I'll artfully get into his secret.—So that Macheath shall not remain a day longer out of my clutches.

SCENE IV

A *gaming-house*

(MACHEATH *in a fine tarnish'd coat*, BEN BUDGE, MATT OF THE MINT.)

MACHEATH. I am sorry, gentlemen, the road was so barren of money. When my friends are in difficulties, I am always glad that my fortune can be serviceable to them. (*Gives them money*) You see, gentlemen, I

¹ shotten herring after ejecting its spawn, the herring is lean and looks emaciated. See *I Henry IV*, II, iv, 143 ² tip off die

am not a mere court friend, who professes every thing and will do nothing.

AIR XLIV. *Lillibulero.*

The modes of the court so common are grown,
That a true friend can hardly be met;
Friendship for interest is but a loan,
Which they let out for what they can get.
'Tis true, you find
Some friends so kind,
Who will give you good counsel themselves to defend.
In sorrowful ditty,
They promise, they pity,
But shift you for money, from friend to friend.

But we, gentlemen, have still honour enough to break through the corruptions of the world.—And while I can serve you, you may command me.

BEN. It grieves my heart that so generous a man should be involv'd in such difficulties, as oblige him to live with such ill company, and herd with gamesters.

MATT. See the partiality of mankind!—One man may steal a horse, better than another look over a hedge.¹—Of all mechanics, of all servile handcrafts-men, a gamester is the vilest. But yet, as many of the quality are of the profession, he is admitted amongst the politest company. I wonder we are not more respected.

MACHEATH. There will be deep play to-night at Marybone, and consequently money may be pick'd up upon the road. Meet me there, and I'll give you the hint who is worth setting.²

MATT. The fellow with a brown coat with a narrow gold binding, I am told, is never without money.

MACHEATH. What do you mean, Matt?—Sure you will not think of meddling with him!—He's a good honest kind of fellow, and one of us.

¹ One man . . . hedge roughly, one man's theft is condoned while the other is condemned for even thinking about it ² setting setting upon

BEN. To be sure, sir, we will put our selves under your direction.

MACHEATH. Have an eye upon the money-lenders.—A rouleau,³ or two, would prove a pretty sort of an expedition. I hate extortion.

MATT. Those rouleaus are very pretty things.—I hate your bank bills—there is such a hazard in putting them off.

MACHEATH. There is a certain man of distinction, who in his time hath nick'd me out of a great deal of the ready. He is in my cash, Ben;—I'll point him out to you this evening, and you shall draw upon him for the debt.—The company are met. I hear the dice-box in the other room. So, gentlemen, your servant. You'll meet me at Marybone.

SCENE V

PEACHUM'S *lock*.

(*A table with wine, brandy, pipes and tobacco*)

PEACHUM, LOCKIT

LOCKIT. The Coronation account,¹ brother Peachum, is of so intricate a nature, that I believe it will never be settled.

PEACHUM. It consists indeed of a great variety of articles.—It was worth to our people, in fees of different kinds, above ten installments.—This is part of the account, brother, that lies open before us.

LOCKIT. A lady's tail of rich brocade—that, I see, is dispos'd of.

PEACHUM. To Mrs. Diana Trapes, the tally-woman,² and she will make a good hand on't in shoes and slippers, to trick out young ladies, upon their going into keeping.

LOCKIT. But I don't see any article of the jewels.

³ rouleau roll of coins

¹ Coronation account covering disposal of items stolen from the crowd at George II's Coronation in 1727 ² tally-woman see p. 32, n. 4

PEACHUM. Those are so well known, that they must be sent abroad—you'll find them enter'd under the article of exportation.—As for the snuff-boxes, watches, swords, etc.—I thought it best to enter them under their several heads.

LOCKIT. Seven and twenty women's pockets³ compleat; with the several things therein contain'd; all seal'd, number'd, and enter'd.

PEACHUM. But, brother, it is impossible for us now to enter upon this affair.—We should have the whole day before us.—Besides, the account of the last half year's plate is in a book by it self, which lies at the other office.

LOCKIT. Bring us then more liquor.—To-day shall be for pleasure—to-morrow for business.—Ah brother, those daughters of ours are two slippery hussies—keep a watchful eye upon Polly, and Macheath in a day or two shall be our own again.

AIR XLV. *Down in the North Country.*

LOCKIT. What gudgeons⁴ are we men!
Ev'ry woman's easy prey.
Though we have felt the hook, again
We bite, and they betray.

The bird that hath been trapt,
When he hears his calling mate,
To her he flies, again he's clapt
Within the wiry grate.

PEACHUM. But what signifies catching the bird, if your daughter Lucy will set open the door of the cage?

LOCKIT. If men were answerable for the follies and frailties of their wives and daughters, no friends could keep a good correspondence together for two days.—This is unkind of you, brother; for among good friends, what they say or do goes for nothing.

(Enter a servant)

³ pockets purses ⁴ gudgeons small fish, easily caught

SERVANT. Sir, here's Mrs. Diana Trapes wants to speak with you.

PEACHUM. Shall we admit her, brother Lockit?

LOCKIT. By all means—she's a good customer, and a fine-spoken woman—and a woman who drinks and talks so freely will enliven the conversation.

PEACHUM. Desire her to walk in.

(*Exit servant*)

SCENE VI

PEACHUM, LOCKIT, MRS. TRAPES

PEACHUM. Dear Mrs. Dye, your servant—one may know by your kiss, that your ginn is excellent.

TRAPES. I was always very curious¹ in my liquors.

LOCKIT. There is no perfum'd breath like it—I have been long acquainted with the flavour of those lips—han't I, Mrs. Dye?

TRAPES. Fill it up.—I take as large draughts of liquor, as I did of love.—I hate a flincher in either.

AIR XLVI. *A Shepherd kept sheep, etc.*

In the days of my youth I could bill like a dove, fa,
la, la, etc.

Like a sparrow at all times was ready for love, fa,
la, la, etc.

The life of all mortals in kissing should pass,
Lip to lip while we're young—then the lip to the
glass, fa, la, etc.

But now, Mr. Peachum, to our business.—If you have blacks of any kind, brought in of late; mantoes²—velvet scarfs—petticoats—let it be what it will—I am your chap—for all my ladies are very fond of mourning.

PEACHUM. Why, look ye, Mrs. Dye—you deal so

¹ curious particular ² mantoes manteaus, a loose robe or mantle

hard with us, that we can afford to give the gentlemen, who venture their lives for the goods, little or nothing.

TRAPES. The hard times oblige me to go very near in my dealing.—To be sure, of late years I have been a great sufferer by the parliament.—Three thousand pounds would hardly make me amends.—The Act for destroying the Mint³ was a severe cut upon our business—'till then, if a customer stept out of the way—we knew where to have her—no doubt you know Mrs. Coaxer—there's a wench now ('till to-day) with a good suit of cloaths of mine upon her back, and I could never set eyes upon her for three months together.—Since the Act too against imprisonment for small sums, my loss there too hath been very considerable, and it must be so, when a lady can borrow a handsome petticoat, or a clean gown, and I not have the least hank⁴ upon her! And, o' my conscience, now-a-days most ladies take a delight in cheating, when they can do it with safety.

PEACHUM. Madam, you had a handsome gold watch of us t'other day for seven guineas.—Considering we must have our profit—to a gentleman upon the road, a gold watch will be scarce worth the taking.

TRAPES. Consider, Mr. Peachum, that watch was remarkable,⁵ and not of very safe sale.—If you have any black velvet scarf—s—they are a handsome winter wear; and take with most gentlemen who deal with my customers.—'Tis I that put the ladies upon a good foot. 'Tis not youth or beauty that fixes their price. The gentlemen always pay according to their dress, from half a crown to two guineas; and yet those hussies make nothing of bilking of me.—Then too,

³ The Act . . . Mint the Mint was an area in Southwark which served as a sanctuary for insolvent debtors and wanted criminals. (See also *Moll Flanders*). In 1724 an Act was passed cleaning up the area and enforcing the law ⁴ hank hold ⁵ remarkable distinctive, thus easily identified

allowing for accidents.—I have eleven fine customers now down under the surgeon's hands,⁶—what with fees and other expences, there are great goings-out, and no comings-in, and not a farthing to pay for at least a month's cloathing.—We run great risques—great risques indeed.

PEACHUM. As I remember, you said something just now of Mrs. Coaxer.

TRAPES. Yes, sir.—To be sure I stript her of a suit of my own cloaths about two hours ago; and have left her as she should be, in her shift,⁷ with a lover of hers at my house. She call'd him up stairs, as he was going to Marybone in a hackney-coach.—And I hope, for her own sake and mine, she will perswade the captain to redeem her, for the captain is very generous to the ladies.

LOCKIT. What captain?

TRAPES. He thought I did not know him.—An intimate acquaintance of yours, Mr. Peachum—only Captain Macheath—as fine as a lord.

PEACHUM. To-morrow, dear Mrs. Dye, you shall set your own price upon any of the goods you like—we have at least half a dozen velvet scarf's, and all at your service. Will you give me leave to make you a present of this suit of night-cloaths for your own wearing?—But are you sure it is Captain Macheath?

TRAPES. Though he thinks I have forgot him; no body knows him better. I have taken a great deal of the captain's money in my time at second-hand, for he always lov'd to have his ladies well drest.

PEACHUM. Mr. Lockit and I have a little business with the captain;—you understand me—and we will satisfie you for Mrs. Coaxer's debt.

LOCKIT. Depend upon it—we will deal like men of honour.

TRAPES. I don't enquire after your affairs—so whatever happens, I wash my hands on't.—It hath always

⁶ customers . . . surgeon's hands either pregnant or being cured of venereal disease ⁷ shift undergarment, today a slip

been my maxim, that one friend should assist another.—But if you please—I'll take one of the scarf's home with me, 'tis always good to have something in hand.

SCENE VII

Newgate

LUCY

Jealousy, rage, love and fear are at once tearing me to pieces. How I am weather-beaten and shatter'd with distresses!

AIR XLVII. *One evening having lost my way.*

I'm like a skiff on the ocean tost,
Now high, now low, with each billow born,
With her rudder broke, and her anchor lost,
Deserted and all forlorn.
While thus I lye rolling and tossing all night,
That Polly lyes sporting on seas of delight!
Revenge, revenge, revenge,
Shall appease my restless sprite.

I have the rats-bane ready.—I run no risque; for I can lay her death upon the ginn, and so many dye of that naturally that I shall never be call'd in question.—But say I were to be hang'd—I never could be hang'd for any thing that would give me greater comfort, than the poysoning that slut.

(Enter FILCH)

FILCH. Madam, here's our Miss Polly come to wait upon you.

LUCY. Show her in.

SCENE VIII

LUCY, POLLY

LUCY. Dear madam, your servant.—I hope you will pardon my passion, when I was so happy to see you

last.—I was so over-run with the spleen,¹ that I was perfectly out of my self. And really when one hath the spleen, every thing is to be excus'd by a friend.

AIR XLVIII. *Now Roger, I'll tell thee, because thou'rt my son.*

When a wife's in her pout,
(As she's sometimes, no doubt)
The good husband as meek as a lamb,
Her vapours to still,
First grants her her will,
And the quieting draught is a dram.
Poor man! And the quieting draught is a dram.

I wish all our quarrels might have so comfortable a reconciliation.

POLLY. I have no excuse for my own behaviour, madam, but my misfortunes.—And really, madam, I suffer too upon your account.

LUCY. But, Miss Polly—in the way of friendship, will you give me leave to propose a glass of cordial to you?

POLLY. Strong-waters are apt to give me the headache—I hope, madam, you will excuse me.

LUCY. Not the greatest lady in the land could have better in her closet, for her own private drinking.²—You seem mighty low in spirits, my dear.

POLLY. I am sorry, madam, my health will not allow me to accept of your offer.—I should not have left you in the rude manner I did when we met last, madam, had not my papa haul'd me away so unexpectedly.—I was indeed somewhat provok'd, and perhaps might use some expressions that were disrespectful.—But really, madam, the captain treated me with so much contempt and cruelty, that I deserv'd your pity, rather than your resentment.

LUCY. But since his escape, no doubt all matters are made up again.—Ah Polly! Polly! 'tis I am the un-

¹ spleen a fit of anger. The spleen was thought to govern the passions and emotions ² private drinking fashionable women professed to drink nothing stronger than wine

happy wife; and he loves you as if you were only his mistress.

POLLY. Sure, madam, you cannot think me so happy as to be the object of your jealousy.—A man is always afraid of a woman who loves him too well—so that I must expect to be neglected and avoided.

LUCY. Then our cases, my dear Polly, are exactly alike. Both of us indeed have been too fond.

AIR XLIX. *O Bessy Bell, etc.*

POLLY. A curse attends that woman's love
Who always would be pleasing.

LUCY. The pertness of the billing dove,
Like tickling, is but teasing.

POLLY. What then in love can woman do?

LUCY. If we grow fond they shun us.

POLLY. And when we fly them, they pursue:

LUCY. But leave us when they've won us.

LUCY. Love is so very whimsical in both sexes, that it is impossible to be lasting.—But my heart is particular, and contradicts my own observation.

POLLY. But really, Mistress Lucy, by his last behaviour, I think I ought to envy you.—When I was forc'd from him, he did not shew the least tenderness.—But perhaps, he hath a heart not capable of it.

AIR L. *Wou'd fate to me Belinda give.*

Among the men, coquets we find,
Who court by turns all woman-kind;
And we grant all their hearts desir'd,
When they are flatter'd and admir'd.

The coquets of both sexes are self-lovers, and that is a love no other whatever can dispossess. I fear, my dear Lucy, our husband is one of those.

LUCY. Away with these melancholy reflections,—indeed, my dear Polly, we are both of us a cup too low.—Let me prevail upon you, to accept of my offer.

AIR LI. *Come, sweet lass.*

Come, sweet lass,
 Let's banish sorrow
 'Till to-morrow;
 Come, sweet lass,
 Let's take a chirping³ glass.
 Wine can clear
 The vapours of despair;
 And make us light as air;
 Then drink, and banish care.

I can't bear, child, to see you in such low spirits.—
 And I must persuade you to what I know will do you
 good.—I shall now soon be even with the hypocritical
 strumpet. (Aside)

SCENE IX

POLLY

All this wheedling of Lucy cannot be for nothing—
 At this time tool when I know she hates me!—The dis-
 sembling of a woman is always the forerunner of
 mischief.—By pouring strong-waters down my throat,
 she thinks to pump some secrets out of me—I'll be
 upon my guard, and won't taste a drop of her liquor,
 I'm resolv'd.

SCENE X

LUCY, *with strong-waters*, POLLY

LUCY. Come, Miss Polly.

POLLY. Indeed, child, you have given yourself
 trouble to no purpose.—You must, my dear, excuse me.

LUCY. Really, Miss Polly, you are so squeamishly
 affected about taking a cup of strong-waters, as a lady
 before company. I vow, Polly, I shall take it mon-
 strously ill if you refuse me.—Brandy and men (though

³ chirping cheering

women love them never so well) are always taken by us with some reluctance—unless 'tis in private.

POLLY. I protest, madam, it goes against me.—What do I see! Macheath again in custody!—Now every glimmering of happiness is lost. (*Drops the glass of liquor on the ground.*)

LUCY. Since things are thus, I'm glad the wench hath escap'd; for by this event, 'tis plain, she was not happy enough to deserve to be poison'd.

SCENE XI

LOCKIT, MACHEATH, PEACHUM, LUCY, POLLY

LOCKIT. Set your heart to rest, captain.—You have neither the chance of love or money for another escape—for you are order'd to be call'd down upon your tryal immediately.

PEACHUM. Away, hussies!—This is not a time for a man to be hamper'd with his wives.—You see, the gentleman is in chains already.

LUCY. O husband, husband, my heart long'd to see thee; but to see thee thus distracts me!

POLLY. Will not my dear husband look upon his Polly? Why hadst thou not flown to me for protection? with me thou hadst been safe.

AIR LII. *The last time I went o'er the moor.*

POLLY. Hither, dear husband, turn your eyes.

LUCY. Bestow one glance to cheer me.

POLLY. Think with that look, thy Polly dyes.

LUCY. O shun me not,—but hear me.

POLLY. 'Tis Polly sues.

LUCY. —'Tis Lucy speaks.

POLLY. Is thus true love requited?

LUCY. My heart is bursting.

POLLY. —Mine too breaks.

LUCY. Must I,

POLLY. —Must I be slighted?

MACHEATH. What would you have me say, ladies?—You see, this affair will soon be at an end, without my disobliging either of you.

PEACHUM. But the settling this point, captain, might prevent a law-suit between your two widows.

AIR LIII. *Tom Tinker's my true love, etc.*

MACHEATH. Which way shall I turn me—how can I decide?

Wives, the day of our death, are as fond as a bride.
One wife is too much for most husbands to hear,
But two at a time there's no mortal can bear.

This way, and that way, and which way I will,
What would comfort the one, t'other wife would take ill.

POLLY. But if his own misfortunes have made him insensible to mine—a father sure will be more compassionate.—Dear, dear sir, sink¹ the material evidence, and bring him off at his tryal—Polly upon her knees begs it of you.

AIR LIV. *I am a poor shepherd undone.*

When my hero in court appears,
And stands arraign'd for his life,
Then think of poor Polly's tears;
For ah! poor Polly's his wife.
Like the sailor he holds up his hand,
Distrest on the dashing wave.
To die a dry death at land,
Is as bad as a watry grave.
And alas, poor Polly!
Alack, and well-a-day!
Before I was in love,
Oh! every month was May.

LUCY. If Peachum's heart is harden'd; sure you, sir, will have more compassion on a daughter.—I know the evidence is in your power.—How then can you be a tyrant to me?

¹ sink suppress

(Kneeling)

AIR LV. *Ianthe the lovely, etc.*

When he holds up his hand arraign'd for his life,
O think of your daughter, and think I'm his wife!
What are cannons, or bombs, or clashing of swords?
For death is more certain by witnesses words.
Then nail up their lips; that dread thunder allay;
And each month of my life will hereafter be May.

LOCKIT. Macheath's time is come, Lucy.—We know our own affairs, therefore let us have no more whimpering or whining.

AIR LVI. *A cobler there was, etc.*

Our selves, like the great, to secure a retreat,
When matters require it, must give up our gang:
And good reasons why,
Or, instead of the fry,²
Ev'n Peachum and I,
Like poor petty rascals, might hang, hang;
Like poor petty rascals, might hang.

PEACHUM. Set your heart at rest, Polly.—Your husband is to dye to-day.—Therefore, if you are not already provided, 'tis high time to look about for another. There's comfort for you, you slut.

LOCKIT. We are ready, sir, to conduct you to the Old Baily.

AIR LVII. *Bonny Dundee.*

MACHEATH. The charge is prepar'd; the lawyers are met;
The judges all rang'd (a terrible show!)
I go, undismay'd.—For death is a debt,
A debt on demand.—So, take what I owe.
Then farewell, my love—dear charmers, adieu.
Contented I die—'tis the better for you.
Here ends all dispute the rest of our lives,
For this way at once I please all my wives.

Now, gentlemen, I am ready to attend you.

² fry small fry

SCENE XII

LUCY, POLLY, FILCH

POLLY. Follow them, Filch, to the court. And when the tryal is over, bring me a particular account of his behaviour, and of every thing that happen'd.—You'll find me here with Miss Lucy. (*Exeunt FILCH*) But why is all this musick?

LUCY. The prisoners, whose tryals are put off till next Session, are diverting themselves.

POLLY. Sure there is nothing so charming as musick! I'm fond of it to distraction—But alas!—now, all mirth seems an insult upon my affliction.—Let us retire, my dear Lucy, and indulge our sorrows.—The noisy crew, you see, are coming upon us.

(*Exeunt*)

(*A dance of prisoners in chains, etc.*)

SCENE XIII

The condemn'd hold

MACHEATH, *in a melancholy posture*

AIR LVIII. *Happy groves.*

O cruel, cruel, cruel case!
Must I suffer this disgrace?

AIR LIX. *Of all the girls that are so smart.*

Of all the friends in time of grief,
When threatening death looks grimmer,
Not one so sure can bring relief,
As this best friend a brimmer.¹

(*Drinks*)

AIR LX. *Britons strike home.*

Since I must swing,—I scorn, I scorn to wince or
whine. (Rises)

¹ brimmer a cup, brimful

AIR LXI. *Chevy Chase.*

But now again my spirits sink;
I'll raise them high with wine. (*Drinks a glass of wine*)

AIR LXII. *To old Sir Simon the king.*

But valour the stronger grows,
The stronger liquor we're drinking.
And how can we feel our woes,
When we've lost the trouble of thinking? (*Drinks*)

AIR LXIII. *Joy to great Caesar.*

If thus—A man can die
Much bolder with brandy.

(*Pours out a bumper of brandy*)

AIR LXIV. *There was an old woman, etc.*

So I drink off this bumper—And now I can stand the
test,
And my comrades shall see, that I die as brave as the
best. (*Drinks*)

AIR LXV. *Did you ever hear of a gallant sailor.*

But can I leave my pretty hussies,
Without one tear, or tender sigh?

AIR LXVI. *Why are mine eyes still flowing.*

Their eyes, their lips, their busses²
Recall my love—Ah must I die!

AIR LXVII. *Green sleeves.*

Since laws were made for ev'ry degree,
To curb vice in others, as well as me,
I wonder we han't better company
Upon Tyburn tree!
But gold from law can take out the sting;
And if rich men like us were to swing,
'Twou'd thin the land, such numbers to string
Upon Tyburn tree!

² busses kisses

JAILOR. Some friends of yours, captain, desire to be admitted—I leave you together.

SCENE XIV

MACHEATH, BEN BUDGE, MATT OF THE MINT

MACHEATH. For my having broke prison, you see, gentlemen, I am order'd immediate execution.—The sheriff's officers, I believe, are now at the door.—That Jemmy Twitcher should peach me, I own surpriz'd me!—'Tis a plain proof that the world is all alike, and that even our gang can no more trust one another than other people. Therefore, I beg you, gentlemen, look well to your selves, for in all probability you may live some months longer.

MATT. We are heartily sorry, captain, for your misfortune.—But 'tis what we must all come to.

MACHEATH. Peachum and Lockit, you know, are infamous scoundrels. Their lives are as much in your power, as yours are in theirs—Remember your dying friend!—'Tis my last request.—Bring those villains to the gallows before you, and I am satisfied.

MATT. We'll do't.

JAILOR. Miss Polly and Miss Lucy intreat a word with you.

MACHEATH. Gentlemen, adieu.

SCENE XV

LUCY, MACHEATH, POLLY

MACHEATH. My dear Lucy—my dear Polly—Whatsoever hath past between us is now at an end.—If you are fond of marrying again, the best advice I can give you, is to ship yourselves off for the West-Indies, where you'll have a fair chance of getting a husband a-piece; or by good luck, two or three, as you like best.¹

POLLY. How can I support this sight!

¹ Transported felons often remained in the colonies after completing their sentences, and wives were thus at a premium

LUCY. There is nothing moves one so much as a great man in distress.

AIR LXVIII. *All you that must take a leap, etc.*

LUCY. Would I might be hang'd!

POLLY. —And I would so too!

LUCY. To be hang'd with you,

POLLY. —My dear, with you.

MACHEATH. O leave me to thought! I fear! I doubt!

I tremble! I droop!—See, my courage is out.

(*Turns up the empty bottle*)

POLLY. No token of love?

MACHEATH. —See, my courage is out.

(*Turns up the empty pot*)

LUCY. No token of love?

POLLY. —Adieu.

LUCY. —Farewell.

MACHEATH. But hark! I hear the toll of the bell.

CHORUS. Tol de rol lol, etc.

JAILOR. Four women more, captain, with a child a-piece! See, here they come.

(*Enter women and children*)

MACHEATH. What—four wives more!—This is too much.—Here—tell the sheriff's officers I am ready.
(*Exit MACHEATH guarded*)

SCENE XVI

To them, enter PLAYER and BEGGAR

PLAYER. But, honest friend, I hope you don't intend that Macheath shall be really executed.

BEGGAR. Most certainly, sir.—To make the piece perfect, I was for doing strict poetical justice.—Macheath is to be hang'd; and for the other personages of the drama, the audience must have suppos'd they were all either hang'd or transported.

PLAYER. Why then, friend, this is a down-right deep tragedy. The catastrophe is manifestly wrong, for an opera must end happily.

BEGGAR. Your objection, sir, is very just; and is easily remov'd. For you must allow, that in this kind of drama, 'tis no matter how absurdly things are brought about—So—you rabble there—run and cry a reprieve—let the prisoner be brought back to his wives in triumph.

PLAYER. All this we must do, to comply with the taste of the town.¹

BEGGAR. Through the whole piece, you may observe such a similitude of manners in high and low life, that it is difficult to determine whether (in the fashionable vices) the fine gentlemen imitate the gentlemen of the road, or the gentlemen of the road the fine gentlemen.—Had the play remain'd, as I at first intended, it would have carried a most excellent moral. 'Twould have shown that the lower sort of people have their vices in a degree as well as the rich: And that they are punish'd for them.

SCENE XVII

To them MACHEATH with rabble, etc.

MACHEATH. So, it seems, I am not left to my choice, but must have a wife at last.—Look ye, my dears, we will have no controversie now. Let us give this day to mirth, and I am sure she who thinks her self my wife will testifie her joy by a dance.

ALL. Come, a dance—a dance.

MACHEATH. Ladies, I hope you will give me leave to present a partner to each of you. And (if I may without offence) for this time, I take Polly for mine.—And for life, you slut,—for we were really marry'd.—As for the rest.—But at present keep your own secret. (*To Polly*)

¹ Macheath's outlandish reprieve satirizes the unmotivated and unnatural endings of the Italian opera and of the sentimental comedy

A *dance*AIR LXIX. *Lumps of pudding, etc.*

Thus I stand like the Turk, with his doxies around;
From all sides their glances his passion confound;
For black, brown, and fair, his inconstancy burns,
And the different beauties subdue him by turns:
Each calls forth her charms, to provoke his desires:
Though willing to all; with but one he retires.
But think of this maxim, and put off your sorrow,
The wretch of to-day, may be happy to-morrow.

CHORUS. But think of this maxim, etc.

FINIS.

From GAY'S LETTERS *



To Swift, June 8, 1714. I am every day attending my Lord Treasurer for his bounty in order to set me out,¹ which he hath promised me upon the following petition which I sent him by Dr. Arbuthnot.²

The Epigrammatical Petition of John Gay.

I'm no more to converse with the swains³
But go where fine people resort
One can live without money on plains
But never without it at Court.

If when with the swains I did gambol
I arrayd me in silver and blue⁴
When abroad and in Courts I shall ramble
Pray, my Lord, how much money will do?

To Swift, December 22, 1722. I lodge at present in Burlington House⁵ and have received many civilitys from many great men but very few real benefits. They wonder at each other for not providing for me and I wonder at 'em all. Experience has given me some knowledge of them, so that I can say that 'tis not in their power to disappoint me.

* Gay had been appointed secretary to the mission headed by Lord Clarendon which went to Hanover in the summer of 1714 in an effort to sway the Elector, George Lewis, later George I, to the Tory party. Gay had been promised 100 pounds for traveling expenses which the Lord Treasurer, Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford, Gay's friend and fellow-Scriblerian ultimately paid him. ² Dr. John Arbuthnot, physician, man of letters, and friend to Gay, Pope, Swift; the addressee of Pope's famous *Epistle*. ³ Gay's pastoral poem, *The Shepherd's Week*. ⁴ See the Prologue to *The Shepherd's Week*, line 40. ⁵ See p. 80, n. 33

To Swift, February 3, 1723. As for the reigning amusement of the town, 'tis entirely musick, real fiddles, bass viols and hautboys⁶ not poetical harps, lyres, and reeds. There's nobody allow'd to say I sing but an eunuch or an Italian woman. Every body is grown now as great a judge of musick as they were in your time of poetry and folks that could not distinguish one tune from another now daily dispute about the different styles of Hendel, Bononcini, and Attilio.⁷ People have now forgot Homer and Virgil and Caesar, or at least they have lost their ranks for in London and Westminster in all polite conversations, Senesino⁸ is daily voted to be the greatest man that ever liv'd. I am oblig'd to you for your advice, as I have been formerly for your assistance in introducing me into business. I shall this year be a Commissioner of the State Lottery⁹ which will be worth to me a hundred and fifty pounds and I am not without hopes that I have friends that will think of some better and more certain provision for me.

To Mrs. Howard,¹⁰ August, 1723. I have long wish'd to be able to put in practice that valuable worldly qualification of being insincere. One of my chief reasons is that I hate to be particular and I think if a man cannot conform to the customs of the world, he is not fit to be encourag'd or to live in it. I know that if one would be agreeable to men of dignity one must study to imitate them, and I know which way they get money and places. I cannot indeed wonder that the talents requisite for a great statesman are so scarce in the world since so many of those who possess them

⁶ hautboys oboes ⁷ Bononcini, Attilio like Handel, composers of Italian Opera ⁸ Senesino a leading singer in Italian Opera ⁹ A post which Gay held from 1723-1731, his only Court appointment ¹⁰ Henrietta Howard, Maid of Honor to the Princess Caroline and mistress to the Prince of Wales (later George II), was Gay's friend at Court. There is something ludicrous about Gay's lecturing Mrs. Howard, who had grown wise in the ways of a Court, on how to get along in the world

are every month cut off in the prime of their age at the Old-Bailey. How envious are statesmen and how jealous are they of rivals! A highway-man never picks up an honest man for a companion, but if such a one accidentally falls in his way, if he cannot turn his heart, he, like a wise statesman, discards him.

To William Fortescue, September 23, 1725. I am again returned to Twickenham,¹¹ upon the news of the person's death you wrote to me about.¹² I cannot say I have any great prospect of success, but the affair remains yet undetermined and I cannot tell who will be his successor. I know I have sincerely your good wishes upon all occasions. One would think that my friends use¹³ me to disappointments to try how many I could bear. If they do so, they are mistaken, for as I don't expect much, I can never be much disappointed.

To Swift (joint letter with Pope), October 22, 1727. The Queen's family¹⁴ is at last settled and in the list, I was appointed Gentleman-Usher to the Princess Louisa, the youngest Princess, which, upon account that I am so far advanc'd in life,¹⁵ I have declin'd accepting and have endeavour'd, in the best manner I could, to make my excuses to her Majesty. So now all my expectations are vanish'd and I have no prospect but in depending wholly upon my self and my own conduct. As I am us'd to disappointments, I can bear them, but as I can have no more hopes, I can no more be disappointed, so that I am in a blessed condition. You remember you were advising me to go into Newgate to finish my scenes the more correctly¹⁶—I now

¹¹ Twickenham Pope's villa near London ¹² Gay had returned in haste to London from Wiltshire on receipt of Fortescue's news that an appointment might be available ¹³ use to expose regularly ¹⁴ Queen's family the new Queen's Court appointments ¹⁵ Gay was then forty-two ¹⁶ Swift was in England during the summer while Gay was working on *The Beggar's Opera*

think I shall, for I have no attendance to hinder me, but my Opera is already finished.

*To Edward Harley, Earl of Oxford,*¹⁷ *February 12, 1728.* I was last night to pay my duty to your Lordship and to thank you for interesting yourself in so kind a manner in my behalf. I had heard before that the King and Queen were to be present at *Julius Caesar* on Friday, so that my intention was to acquaint your Lordship that I had fixt on Thursday. As to the boxes on that day,¹⁸ I fear by what I have heard about the town, they are taken up already, but if your Lordship would be so good as to send a servant to the box-keeper, I hope I shall have the honour of Lady Oxford's presence in the very box she chooses, for I know Mr. Rich would upon all occasions be very glad to oblige your Lordship.

To Swift, February 15, 1728. I have deferr'd writing to you from time to time till I could give you an account of the Beggar's Opera. It is acted at the playhouse in Lincoln's Inn Fields with such success that the playhouse hath been crowded every night. To night is the fifteenth time of acting and 'tis thought it will run a fortnight longer. I have order'd Motte¹⁹ to send the play to you the first opportunity. I made no interest either for approbation or money nor hath any body been prest to take tickets for my Benefit,²⁰ notwithstanding which, I think I shall make an addition to my fortune of between six and seven hundred pounds. I know this account will give you pleasure, as

¹⁷ Son of the Lord Treasurer, Gay's early friend ¹⁸ boxes . . .
 that day box seats at the Theatre Royal for *The Beggar's Opera*. As is the case with a "smash" hit, tickets for *The Beggar's Opera* were hard to come by. The play's appeal was such that even royalty could not resist—the King and Queen attended a performance on February 22, 1728 ¹⁹ Swift's publisher ²⁰ Benefit during the run of a successful play, special performances were held, on designated nights, for the author's benefit

I have push'd through this precarious affair without servility or flattery. As to any favours from great men, I am in the same state you left me, but I am a great deal happier as I have no expectations. . . . Lord Cobham says that I should have printed it [*The Beggar's Opera*] in Italian over against the English, that the ladys might have understood what they read. The outlandish (as they now call it) Opera hath been so thin²¹ of late that some have call'd that the Beggar's Opera and if the run continues, I fear I shall have remonstrances drawn up against me by the Royal Academy of Musick.²²

To Swift, March 20, 1728. The Beggar's Opera hath now been acted thirty six times and was as full the last night as the first and as yet, there is not the least probability of a thin audience, though there is a discourse about the town that the Directors of the Royal Academy of Musick design to solicit against its being play'd on the outlandish Opera days, as it is now call'd. On the Benefit day of one of the actresses last week, one of the players falling sick, they were oblig'd to give out²³ another play or dismiss the audience. A play was given out but the people call'd out for the Beggar's Opera and they were forc'd to play it or the audience would not have stay'd. I have got, by all this success, between seven and eight hundred pounds and Rich (deducting the whole charges of the house) hath clear'd already near four thousand pounds. . . . There is a mezzo-tinto²⁴ print publish'd to day of Polly, the heroine of the Beggar's Opera, who was before unknown and is now in so high vogue, that I am in doubt whether her fame does not surpass that of the Opera itself.²⁵

²¹ thin poorly attended ²² The Royal Academy sponsored the Italian Opera ²³ give out schedule or announce ²⁴ mezzotint engraving ²⁵ Lavinia Fenton, the actress who played Polly Peachum, was the rage of London during the winter and spring of 1728. In the role of Polly, her charms caught the eye of the Duke of Bolton who ultimately made her his Duchess

To Swift, May 16, 1728. The Beggar's Opera is acted here²⁶ but our Polly here hath got no fame, but the actors have got money. I have sent by Dr. Delany, the Opera, Polly Peachum, and Captain Macheath.²⁷ I would have sent you my own head²⁸ which is now graving to make up the gang, but it is not yet finish'd. I suppose you must have heard that I have had the honour to have had a sermon preach'd against my works by a Court chaplain, which I look upon as no small addition to my fame.²⁹

To Swift, December 2, 1728. I have been confin'd about ten days but never to my bed, so that I hope soon to get abroad about my business, which is, the care of the second part of the Beggar's Opera³⁰ which was almost ready for rehearsal. But Rich receiv'd the Duke of Grafton's³¹ commands (upon an information he was rehearsing a play improper to be represented) not to rehearse any new play whatever 'till his Grace hath seen it. What will become of it, I know not but I am sure I have written nothing that can be legally supprest, unless the setting vices in general in an odious light and virtue in an amiable one may give offence.

To Swift, March 18, 1729. You must undoubtedly have heard that the Duchess³² took up my defense with the King and Queen in the cause of my play and that she hath been forbid the Court for interesting

²⁶ Gay was writing from Bath, the famous eighteenth-century resort ²⁷ Opera . . . Macheath a copy of the play and engravings of Polly and Macheath ²⁸ my own head an engraving of himself ²⁹ In March, Dr. Thomas Herring, the King's Chaplain, delivered a sermon in Lincoln's Inn Chapel condemning *The Beggar's Opera* for presenting crime in a favorable light. Swift wrote a defense of Gay for the *Dublin Intelligencer*, May 25, 1728, "A Vindication of Mr. Gay and *The Beggar's Opera*" ³⁰ Polly, written as a sequel to *The Beggar's Opera* ³¹ The Lord Chamberlain who served as the Royal censor. Ten days later, the Duke, no doubt on Walpole's prompting, banned the production of *Polly* ³² The Duchess of Queensberry

herself to increase my fortune for the publication of it without being acted. The Duke too hath given up his employment³³ which he would have done if the Duchess had not met this treatment, upon account of ill usage from the Ministers but this hasten'd him in what he had determin'd. The play is now almost printed with the musick, words, and basses engrav'd on 31 copper plates which, by my friend's assistance, hath a probability to turn greatly to my advantage.³⁴ . . . For writing in the cause of virtue and against the fashionable vices, I am look'd upon at present as the most obnoxious person almost in England.

To Swift, November 9, 1729. Next week I believe I shall be in town, not at Whitehall for those lodgings were judg'd not convenient for me and dispos'd of.³⁵

. . . You have often twitted me in the teeth with hankering after the Court. In that you mistook me, for I know by experience that there is no dependence that can be sure but a dependence upon ones-self.

³³ employment his Royal appointments ³⁴ In its printed form, *Polly* brought Gay some 1200 pounds, more than he could have hoped for had the play been produced ³⁵ Because of *Polly*, Gay was dispossessed of the apartment at Whitehall to which he was entitled as Commissioner of the Lottery